

# FILM CULTURE

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# FILM CULTURE

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**OUR COVER:** Stanley Kubrick during the shooting of *Paths of Glory*, produced by James B. Harris and to be released soon through United Artists. This, Kubrick's fourth film (others being *Fear and Desire*, *Killer's Kiss*, and *The Killing*), puts him among the most promising film directors. Although not yet completely free from commercial considerations, his films show a distinct sensitivity and a true cinematic perception. *Paths of Glory* is a study of the senselessness of war and the corruption of the leaders of armies.

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Last month, a series of symposia devoted to "sponsored" and "journalistic" films were held at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. American and Canadian directors described their techniques and their purposes in making these films. It was stressed again and again that they were artists, that their aim was to create "artistic" films in the tradition of the great documentarists. However, the screened examples of the "sponsored" films showed an embarrassing mediocrity of techniques, thinking, and sensibilities, even in the best of them: *Giants of the Land*, *The American Farmer*, *Newfoundland Scene*, *Jamaica Flavour*, etc. It seemed that, instead of upholding, these film-makers were constantly betraying the documentary and journalistic traditions.

On the other hand, one was struck by the strength and freshness of some television films such as *Out of Darkness*, for instance, or "The Search" series of CBS, or Peter Glushanok's *A Dancer's World*. It was repeatedly shown that television films can use immediacy, television's most characteristic quality, to excellent advantage. After re-examining these exemplary programs, one fully realizes the degree of betrayal of proper television techniques in such recent programs as, let us say, the "Seven Lively Arts" series: television as stage vaudeville plus a pale imitation of "The March of Time."

It wouldn't be just, though, to give the impression that only our film-makers are betraying their duties as documentarists and journalists. Italian documentarists, for instance, instead of exploring the abundance of their own country's problems, in the last four years have given themselves over to an endless cycle of shallow, escapist documentaries à la *Lost Continent*, which André Bazin has very properly branded as *neo-exotisme* (our own representative of this vogue being Lowell Thomas). And some French film journalists, as several of their recent documentaries demonstrate, are lending their cameras to the cause of justifying French colonialism in Algeria.

However, there are some areas putting out worthwhile work in the documentary field: in Puerto Rico, for example, a series of films produced by the Department of Education — each filling a specific need of the community, each one dealing with a concrete and timely issue — is being screened successfully in every village. Being made out of the necessity of educating the people, many of these films bear a genuine spontaneity and honesty which the usual sponsored film, the one made to sell and to make money, does not possess. Films such as *El Puente* or *Modesta* could be pointed out as good examples of the work of the Puerto Rican documentarists.

Another hopeful sign for a modern and up-to-date documentary movement is seen in the attempts of several young British film-makers known as the Free Cinema group. Like their predecessors, the British documentarists of the Thirties, these young film-makers turned for their subjects to their own contemporary life, exploring various aspects of modern life, and came up with the freshest, most individual documentaries that can be seen anywhere today. *O Dreamland*, *Together*, *Every Day Except Christmas*, *Nice Time*, *Momma Don't Allow* — they all contain truth and originality of a sort not to be found in any of our contemporary "sponsored" films.

JONAS MEKAS

## IN MEMORIAM OF DIMITRI KIRSANOV, A NEGLECTED MASTER

A great artist and man is gone. Almost unknown in this country and forgotten in Europe, Dimitri Kirsanov was a poet who chose the cinema as his medium of expression and gave us, with *Ménilmontant*, *Brumes d'automne* and *Rapt*, three of the most beautiful and intelligent films in the history of the cinema. He is neglected, partly because his films are poetry and do not fit the usual categories, partly because only one of them is easily accessible.

An admirer of his *Ménilmontant*, the only one of his films I had had an opportunity to see, I contacted Kirsanov in Paris two years ago. Incredulous that anyone should be interested in his films, he agreed to a meeting with Lotte Eisner and myself. This was followed by another, and later by a screening of some of his recent short films. It was soon evident that here was a man of modesty, simplicity, and integrity. He seemed young and energetic. He talked of making a film in Spain if plans, for once, worked out. News of his death came as a shock.

Kirsanov had come to Paris in 1919 and studied the cello at the Conservatory, acting as a stage extra and playing in an orchestra at night. His realization that "le cinéma est un langage" (quotations throughout this article are his own words) was sparked about 1921 by the Swedish film *La montre brisée*. During the next two or three years he made his first two films: *L'ironie du destin* (1922-3), of which no copy exists, and *Ménilmontant* (1924), circulated by the Museum of Modern Art, New York. "Knowing nothing" about the technique of film-making, he hired an old cameraman, Léonce Crouen, then out of a job. Crouen shot only the beginning of *Ménilmontant*, "everything which is in two dimensions." Then Kirsanov "took the camera off the tripod" and "shot the rest" himself.

On *Ménilmontant*, as he was always to do, Kirsanov worked alone. He stated definitely that he had not been in contact with either the French "avantgarde" or the Russian émigrés, with both of whom he is often associated. "Isolated then as now," making his elaborate dissolves and montages in the camera itself, he invented for *Ménilmontant* independently most of the techniques which were being developed at the same time, or later, by others better financed and more publicized.

*Ménilmontant* was followed, in 1926, by *Brumes d'automne* ("put together according to musical formulae"), shown recently at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, and in 1933 by *Rapt* (based on the novel "La séparation des races" by C. F. Ramuz), also fortunately extant.\*

*Ménilmontant* and *Brumes d'automne* had been brilliant, original, and mature, "independent" works. *Rapt*, one of the finest of all sound films, was the extension of these achievements into a full-length feature production with sound. One would think that with the release of such a film a rich career would have been opened to its creator. On the contrary, in the twenty-four years

\* But it is available only in a single preservation copy held by the British Film Institute, London.

WALTER S. MICHEL IS A STUDENT OF THE ARTS RESIDING IN NEW YORK. HE IS WORKING ON A STUDY OF THE CLASSICAL SILENT FILM.

MENILMONTANT: The slaying of the parents. (One frame from each of shots 29-35 is shown.)

29: Highlighted hand moves (blurred) toward axe where it becomes focussed (shown); hand and axe move (blurred) diagonally up to right and out of frame, leaving still of post. (11 frames.) 30: Woman's face, frozen with terror; only the arm moves feebly downward. (9 frames.) 31: Hand is shown moving up to right; it will reverse in frame 6 to swing back and out of frame on the left; at the same time, the body, truncated on three sides, moves to right. (12 frames.) 32: Man moves slightly to left and down (backwards). (9 frames.)

33: Still. (6 frames.) 34: Man's head moves slightly down (falling?). (7 frames.) 35: Almost still. (6 frames.) 36: (Frames 1-12) — attacker's head and arm, as he reaches out to strike, enter frame from bottom right and reach position shown; (frames 13-17) — he swings down to left, going out of frame; (frames 18-25) — empty except for the out-of-focus background; (frames 26-37) — attacker hurtles back up from left, traverses frame and now swings out to right; (frames 38-54) — same as 18-25; (frames 55-70) — blank (sic); (frames 71-105, — same as 18-25. 37 (not shown): Still shot of ground; axe falls into frame and comes to rest on ground.





MENILMONTANT: The girl discovers the bodies of her parents. (One frame from each of shots 53-58 is shown.)

53: (Frames 1-5) — girl whirls backwards into frame on diagonal from lower left, laughing, her hair flying (blurred); (frames 6-19) — still as shown.



54: Neighbors surrounding the bodies, still. (14 frames.)



55: Almost still, except for eyes moving from left to right. (23 frames.)



56: Still. (25 frames.)



57: Still. (34 frames.)



58: (Frames 1-18) — still, as shown; (frame 19) — head turns to right quickly (blurred); (frames 20-21) — held in that position, now in focus; (frames 22-24) — hand goes to mouth and head returns to former position (blurred).

59 (not shown): Girl, in long shot, runs back to her sister.

between *Rapt* and his death early this year, Kirsanov never again had the opportunity of directing a major film with any appreciable freedom. Thus has the cinema, stepchild of the arts, treated its masters ever since *Greed*.

Of the films which he did make during these years — most of them short, low-budget productions — he showed me the three which he liked best: *Arrière saison*, *Mort d'un cerf* and *Deux amis*. These fairly recent films increase one's astonishment at the neglect of this fine artist, for all are accomplished and important and could be an inspiration to independent film-makers; but they are neither shown at festivals nor circulated by archives.

Of the other films he made during this period, he was highly critical. *Quartier sans soleil* (1939) he called "very uneven, but interesting in parts"; three small musical films, which came next, "gentil, pas plus"; *Franco du port*, "a gangster film, vulgar." The last was a partly commercial film, as were the two following: *Faits divers à Paris* and *Morte moisson* (1949), both made with some government assistance and containing some interesting scenes which, it appears, he was permitted to write himself. Also included in his criticism was the early *Sables* (1926) which he condemned unsparingly as "mauvais, puérole, stupide: joli" and considers not his own film ("an imbecile wrote the story").

One feature-length film directed by Kirsanov after *Rapt* was *Le craneur*, a well-made thriller released in 1955. Stating that this was his first really commercial film, "made with cold reason, calculated for commercial success," he would not allow that there was anything good about it. When I pointed out a part which I had liked, he shrugged it off, quite impatiently, with a "c'est facile."

So ended the career of a great master.

In these conversations, Mlle. Eisner and I were the ones to be upset by the extent of his neglect. He himself was clearly no longer concerned — if ever he had been — with questions of recognition. All his thinking and energy seemed directed only toward the one end: creation. I think he would have gone anywhere on earth to make a film.

## II.

It is impossible to assess the achievement of Dimitri Kirsanov unless the use of the film medium as a poetic vehicle is properly appreciated. All extraneous considerations, those of the sociological, political, or slice-of-life variety, must be forgotten. Kirsanov's films can be understood only in terms of themes and counter-themes, built up visually by artifice, i.e., by non-naturalistic means, using image, design, and metaphor. The camera, with all its possibilities and limitations, is supreme, but it is exploited only in so far as the adumbrations of the theme require and permit. The "story" is of the simplest nature, usually banal, a framework merely, but one which accommodates itself to the conception presented.

A study of Kirsanov's work from such a non-narrative point of view is scheduled for future publication. In the present article, only a few introductory remarks on each of his most important films can be given.

*Ménilmontant* already exhibits in full maturity Kirsanov's ability as a photographer and editor. Cuts range in length from one frame (violence scenes) to over 600 frames (pan down from hotel window to dark door where

the camera stops while the couple enters; pan back up to window, now lighted, where the camera stops briefly; pan down again to door where the camera stops while a newcomer arrives); motion within the frame may be so fast that it is blurred (violence scenes), or it may be completely still (successive stills when Sibirskaia sees the dead body of her father); lighting traverses the full range from dazzling to black; the camera may be stationary, or it may veer on top of a bus or swing over cobblestones.

But always the technique complements the image and mood. Always, theme and execution are matched. Nothing is "experimental," *recherché*, or "avantgarde." Kirsanov gives us a perfect rendering of poetic themes in a visual medium.

This is seen in its most obvious form in *Brumes d'automne*, a film of a single mood conveyed through shots of rain and mist, through reflections in pools of the saturated earth, and by the measured stateliness of movement. Distorted autumn landscapes anticipate many of the gratuitous flourishes of later "experimental" filmmakers, but here they are poetically justified as seen through the tears of Nadia Sibirskaia.

One of the most brilliant of cameramen and directors, Kirsanov is also one of the few film-makers who used sound creatively. This is clear from *Rapt*, with its triple counterpoint of visual, music and stylized natural sound. The techniques used in this film are described in the articles by Honegger and Hoérée in "Revue Musicale," December 1934 (still some of the best writing on the subject of sound in film). A treatment of disorder and violence, *Rapt* has an abduction from an Alpine village and the consequent feud as its setting. It is characteristic of Kirsanov's method that the whole development is already summarized in the first few shots: in a tranquil setting with two men beside a stream, all in long shot, one of the men suddenly beats the water, splashing the other and disturbing the pastoral music. Playfulness supersedes stillness, in preparation for violence. The very last impression of the film is also reinforced by sound: the braying laughter of the village idiot over chords of music swelling to the finale. *Rapt* is a film of such magnificence that it must be classed as one of the three or four best sound films made. It would be flawless, but for the unaccountable intrusion in a few places of that affliction of the sound film, an excess of dialogue.

The same criticism may also be made of *Deux amis*, based on the story by Maupassant. Though a fine achievement in acting and atmosphere, this is essentially a dialogue film.

*Arrière saison* and *Mort d'un cerf* are a return to the perfect collaboration between sound and image found in *Rapt*, only on the lesser scale necessitated by the more modest means then at the disposal of the director.

In *Arrière saison* (1952), a woman leaves the lonely, boring life with her husband, a woodcutter, but returns on the following day. The mood is reminiscent of *Brumes d'automne*. The sound track consists entirely of music, except for one brief interval: when the woman returns, the music is cut off abruptly and we hear the axes and shouts of the woodcutters in the distance. As she enters the house, the music resumes.

*Mort d'un cerf*, a commissioned film, transforms the conventional events of a stag hunt into satire by witty use of cutting, sound, and silence. Some impressions of

old prints of deer hunting lend a measure almost of elegance to the proceedings in the early scenes, although the arrival of the hunters by car is ominous. The ending shows the pack and hunters in full pursuit, accompanied by a crescendo of the music and hunting horns. Suddenly and abruptly, the music is cut off: the stag is seen standing still, surrounded by yelping dogs. In thudding anticlimax, the stag, standing thus at bay, is felled by rifle shots. The music resumes, the hunting horns building up to a great victory shout. Ladies munch sandwiches, the hunt is over.

While most of Kirsanov's films are at present extremely difficult of access, they could easily be made available to all those interested. One may hope that this opportunity will not be lost and that, as the finest tribute to a great director, his major *oeuvre* will be restored to circulation.

ROBERT M. HAMMOND

## AN INTERVIEW WITH CHARLES SPAAK WRITER VS. DIRECTOR

"I am what they call a cinema work-horse. I adore the cinema. It is my life."

This unqualified statement of complete devotion to the seventh art is the creed of Charles Spaak, the author of the scenario for *La grande illusion*. Today, at the age of 54, Spaak remains a vital and prolific writer, obscured only because of the vogue for indentifying films by director and star, rather than by scenarist. Most scenarists quite naturally believe in their prime importance in the creation of the film. Now, with so few directors and critics sharing in this belief, a scenario is simply "allowed" to disappear once the film has been completed, although students of the cinema might well profit from an opportunity to scrutinize these scenarios. Spaak is an outspoken advocate of the importance of the writer.

Like his famous brother Paul-Henri Spaak, he is a native of Brussels and, since he is tall and big-boned, one is tempted to conclude that his size is a heritage from his Nordic ancestors. Whatever the reason, one is impressed by the physical stature of this vigorous man. One is even more impressed by the contained and gentle quality of his vigor. *Vis-à-vis*, his humor bears the same restraint. Anyone who has seen his *Adorables creatures* knows his humor in full and robust abandon. In the man, this humor twinkles from his eyes and pops out slyly behind his colorful speech. He is confident. He will tell you he is good and he'll tell you that some of his contemporaries are bad. You have the feeling that

ROBERT M. HAMMOND IS AN ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF FRENCH AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA. HIS ARTICLES HAVE APPEARED IN THE "MODERN LANGUAGE JOURNAL" AND "CINEMA 57."

his frankness is not a defense of petty jealousy but rather that it is a healthy assurance born of accomplishment.

Thus he is a pleasant man to interview. He likes talking about his trade. He likes talking about himself. With each question he settles back on his sofa and speaks volubly by way of fully and affectionately developing his reply. Some questions cause him to rise and move with strength and ease about the room in search of books and scenarios to show his interviewer. He feels that he is worth talking about, and his humor gives him the perspective necessary to keep him from being overbearing.

"So you're making a collection of scenarios. It's an excellent idea and needs to be done before they are all lost. I'm sorry now that I don't have a complete collection of those I have written. I also started a general collection, but I haven't had the time to keep it up." With that he showed me his shelf of scenarios. In the middle I saw Cocteau's "La Belle et la Bête."

"What!" I exclaimed. "You have *that*? I haven't been able to find it anywhere! Even Jean Marais and Cocteau can't find their copies."

"They can't?" he replied. Then he considered very briefly and added, "It's a curious one. Here, let me give it to you."

"If you had all of your own scenarios, you'd have a pretty big collection, wouldn't you?" I ventured.

"Oh, I've written around fifty scenarios" was his reply. "Naturally, they're not all important. Many are just commercial. If you like, I'll give you a list of those I consider my best ones. I keep all my information in a notebook," he added, seating himself at his desk. He looked out of his window, which overlooks the Seine, as he thought the matter over. "I believe I'll list them by director rather than by chronology."

The following was his list:

Cayatte:

*Retour à la vie* (1947)  
*Justice est faite* (1949)  
*Nous sommes tous des assassins* (1951)  
*Avant le deluge* (1953)  
*Le dossier noir* (1954)

Renoir:

*Les bas-fonds* (1935)  
*La grande illusion* (1936)

Feyder:

*Pension Mimosas* (1934)  
*Kermesse héroïque* (1935)

Grémillon:

*Le ciel est à vous* (1941)

Calef:

*Jericho* (1945)

Duvivier:

*La belle équipe* (1936)  
*La fin du jour* (1937)

Christian-Jaque:

*L'assassinat du père Noël* (1940)  
*Adorables creatures* (1952)

Carné:

*Thérèse Raquin* (1952)

Storch:

*Le banquet des fraudeurs* (1950)

When he had finished his list, he looked at me expectantly.

"Would you like a Scotch and soda?" he asked. And as he prepared the drinks, the following question and answer session began:

— How did you get into film writing? Were you a technician first?

— No. I have always loved the theater. When I was still quite young, I wrote plays. Then I studied law. I failed one of the exams. I would have been able to take it over again, but my father said to me: "If you failed the examination, perhaps it is because you don't really want to be a lawyer. Go to Paris and see." I went there, and I became Jacques Feyder's secretary. I have regrets from time to time for not having gone into the theater, but in general, I find this life worthwhile.

I work at it every day. I'm never on vacation . . . I love the life. You're always living on your nerves — and from time to time you make an important film . . . And some fine things happen to you. I received a letter from a man in "death row" two days before his execution. He was writing about *Nous sommes tous des assassins* (*We Are All Murderers*). Imagine, he was executed two days afterward!

I concentrate on two things: producing something original and producing things that are demanded of you by the director. The majority of writers for the movies are adapters. They do not write original scenarios. Jeanson isn't good. Aurenche and Bost complement each other marvelously. Their adaptations are real author's works.

— Is there any chance that the demand for original scenarios will grow?

— No. It is a matter of capital. A known title is surer.

— Who are the best directors you have worked with?

— There have been four men in my life: Feyder, Renoir, Grémillon and Cayatte. I began with Jacques Feyder. After two silent films, we did *Kermesse héroïque* (*Carnival in Flanders*) — which does not budge; that is, it does not date, because of the costumes — and *Pension Mimosas* — which appears comical because of the outdated costumes but which could be and really is drama. Feyder "invented" neo-realism here seventeen years before Italian neo-realism.

With Renoir, I made *La grande illusion* (which is not dated, by the way, thanks to the military uniforms . . .) and *Les bas-fonds* (*The Lower Depths*), an adaptation. Renoir is the most artistic, the most gifted, of the four directors.

Grémillon was perhaps the most gifted, but he has come to naught. I made seven films with him. Two of them never reached the shooting stage.

But Cayatte is the great event of my life.

— Are you doing the life of Seznec with him?

— No. We are no longer together. I made *Retour à la vie* with him.

— What are you working on now?

— Presently (I'm leaving the third of July for the Midi) I shall be making a great film with Carné: *Les mains vides*, on the subject of youth . . . you know . . . James Dean . . . It's a fine title.

— How will this differ from *Rebel Without a Cause*?

— It will be entirely different. For one thing, the students in the film will be serious and intelligent students. Not delinquents. *Les mains vides* is the story of

young people who deny the existence of love — and fall in love.

— When you work with directors, do you find it really a matter of collaboration?

— Yes. I believe in the complete participation of both the author and director. However, for *Kermesse héroïque* I wrote only the scenario, not the dialogues. I quarreled with Feyder, and Bernard Zimmer wrote the lines. And he did very well.

— How about the collaboration in *La grande illusion*?

— Renoir changes a lot. He improvises as he works.

— With the consent of the scenarist?

— No. Renoir never consulted me. He used to say: "We're two buddies working together, and one is just a little more of a director than the other." And, in fact, making a film is actually a way of living. I *live* with the director. It's really a marriage, where the director is the mother and the scenarist the father. The director usually carries the film nine or ten months from the scenario to the finished film, and the director must even have a somewhat feminine character, coquettish with the press, flirting with the producer, and fretting over his own state and that of the gestated baby. On the other hand, the scenarist, like the father, says simply, "O.K., so I'll turn out another kid!" Then, like that, he takes off!!

— Don't you think that one should study the works of scenarists as one studies other literary art?

— Yes. I think it is a great injustice to the scenarist for films always to be grouped by director. The scenarist has a certain vision of the world. The director changes enormously; the scenarist stays the same. It is he, not the director, who has the continuity of style.

— I have noticed that many of your films have a social preoccupation. Do you consider yourself a sociological or a social writer?

— Some critics do, I know, but I prefer to consider myself a realist. People are generally well-intentioned. They mean well, but they are at grips with events. They want very much to be proud, but they can't. *Jericho* is typical: too great an effort is demanded of the characters. I find first a theme, and then a milieu. It's a matter of more than just a story.

— *Jericho* is about the resistance, isn't it?

— A very important film on the resistance — the truth about the resistance. *La bataille du rail* (Clément) is nothing but a delusion.

— For your *Banquet des fraudeurs* (about the Benelux experiment) did you seek any information from your brother?

— Men of state and politicians have no imagination. The idea of nationality is outmoded. Patriotism and peace are only catchwords. What the ordinary man wants to know is: "What's in it for me within six months?" If you can guarantee him something, he'll take the idea.

— How do you feel you fare at the hands of the critics?

— The critic who pleased me the most is Jacques Natanson. He wrote, in reviewing *Jericho*, "Spaak is the more at his ease, the greater the subject."

At that moment we were interrupted by the arrival of the Belgian director Paul Haesaerts, who had an appointment with Spaak. We ended our interview looking at a deluxe edition of Clair's "*Le silence est d'or.*" Fearing that the display of a volume with that title might be a subtle hint cast in my direction and knowing that I had

really asked all the questions I had wanted to, I decided to depart.

It is good to hear a film writer speak for himself and hence for his fellows. Far too much attention, as Spaak says, is devoted to the director and to the stars. Naturally there is jealousy among the groups responsible for a good production. Spaak, for instance, at one time flatly stated he despised stars! (I had asked him if he ever had written a scenario for a given star. "Yes, and almost always it's not the one who finally plays the part. I don't like actors.") His attitude toward directors shows a certain condescending distrust. It is for those of us who appreciate films to maintain the balance which director, actor, and writer are too involved to establish. And certainly the director has been, to date, the spoiled child of the cinema. Actors are not far behind. I do not mean to suggest that their roles are unimportant. Rather I feel, with Spaak, that the writer contributes an equal share to the making of a film. He, too, should be studied, analyzed, and criticized on his own merits.

In the United States we have even less of an opportunity to hear from a film writer because of the "mill" employed in Hollywood. Kazan is a director who shows signs of breaking with the tradition of the anonymity of the scenarist. His preface to the published "Face in the Crowd" by Budd Schulberg is encouraging. But Schulberg and Tennessee Williams are authors from other fields of writing who have approached the film, and Kazan retains the stage director's respect for his authors. Paddy Chayefsky is about the only American writer who, since he writes primarily for the film, could be compared with Spaak.

Spaak occupies an enviable position — respected by the French directors, if not by all of the French critics. What is needed now is the study of the styles and thought of such writers as Spaak, for, as he said, it is not always the director who gives a film its unity of style — more often, it's the writer who is the creator with a unity of inspiration and "a certain vision of the world."

GUIDO ARISTARCO

## THREE TENDENCIES: A POSTSCRIPT TO THE VENICE FILM FESTIVAL

This year, unlike last, the directing committee of the Festival did not have complete control over the selection of all films. They were able to choose only four of the

GUIDO ARISTARCO IS EDITOR OF ITALY'S MOST IMPORTANT FILM PERIODICAL, "CINEMA NUOVO," AND AUTHOR OF SEVERAL BOOKS ON FILM HISTORY AND FILM THEORY, AMONG THEM "INVITO ALLE IMMAGINI," "IL COLORE NEL FILM," "IL CINEMA ITALIANO DEL DOPOGUERRA," AND THE MONUMENTAL "STORIA DELLE TEORICHE DEL FILM."

fourteen exhibited; the remainder were more or less imposed by the producers according to an agreement reached with the FIAPF (International Federation of Film Producers). It should be noted at the outset that this is one of the reasons why the Festival had so few works of cultural and artistic value or even works that might show any real cinematic progress. However, this year's Festival does point up three reawakened tendencies which are once again becoming dominant — this in addition, of course, to the usual commercial product or the well-constructed film made by able and intelligent craftsmen (Zinnemann's *A Hatful of Rain* and Brooks's *Something of Value* being examples of the latter).

As to the three tendencies, the first of these is a mixing of the typical with the extravagant. It assumes various forms and dimensions in Nicholas Ray's *Bitter Victory* and in Cayatte's *An Eye for an Eye* (wherein Cayatte, no longer sustained by a thesis, reveals a painful mediocrity). The escape into the pathological and the ideological bases of this escape stand out with equal salience in both the French and the American director. The escape appears totally abstract and empty inasmuch as it condemns the reality from which it escapes in a merely generic and superficial manner, and in its protest it expresses no concrete criticism. In the American film, the decoration pinned on an armory mannequin implies that war merely destroys and that the heroism which evokes respect is that of human values which manage to conquer bestial cruelty. But, again, Ray's condemnation is superficial and generic, his protest expresses no concrete criticism, his direction is aimless. To come right down to it, what war is he talking about? It's all well and good to condemn violence and militarism, but then — since the film is already so loaded down with symbols — why doesn't that German whom the British have captured symbolize militarism, violence, and the well-determined and Nazi-originated war? Quoting Lukacs, the ontology of the "dejection" of the isolated individual "means that, lacking any effective typicalness" (Stendhalian or Balzacian, say) "it can recognize and represent only abstract oppositions, abstract extremes: the ordinary and the eccentric." This representation of the pathological and perverted, this aspiration to a detachment which cannot on principle be expressed in action, makes it impossible for these films to raise themselves above (again Lukacs) "the level of sickness, nausea, desire, nostalgia." Furthermore, the very representation of the pathological determines the nature of "man's fate," presented, of course, as a *fait accompli* and unalterable on principle (the pathological and the exceptional in the negative sense are also at the heart of David Miller's British film *The Story of Esther Costello*).

The second tendency, no less complex than the first, can be found in the subject matter and viewpoint of Visconti's *Le notti bianche* (based on Dostoevski's "White Nights"), in the refuge he takes in the minuteness of his subjective psychologizing and analysis — on the borderline between dream and reality — of passions which seem to flow in the symbolic climate of a Gérard de Nerval. Why have we loved as well as admired Luchino Visconti's films? First, because of his maintaining the tradition of Verga and Balzac and, generally, of the great authentic realists of the French literary nineteenth century; secondly, because of his artistic honesty which leads his characters — from Gino in *Ossessione* to 'Ntoni

in *La terra trema*, from Maria in *Bellissima* to Franz in *Senso* — to deny their own origins in a dying aristocracy, a death the director well knows. There is a dialectic in Visconti's work and it is a compound of, on the one hand, the completely transitory and "cadaveric" in his own heritage — the corrupt and decadent — and, on the other hand, an element which derives from his acute awareness of this corruption and decadence, his presentiment of and his belief in an eventual transformation, his sympathy and solidarity with the new man born of a society in crisis, whether he be a man still in an instinctive state, like Gino, or in a transitional one, like 'Ntoni, or fully aware, like Usso in *Senso*. *Senso* clearly illustrates this dialectic and double personality, and hence it is the film most dramatically "lived" by its director. He is both Franz (the past, heredity, and the knowledge of their passing) and Usso (the present, the new man towards whom he inclines and to whom he acknowledges greater rights of citizenship); the film — which broadens its meaning through its well-chosen narration and transcends journalism to become history — remains Visconti's highest achievement, the one in which he most fully expresses his complicated and contradictory, though dialectically coherent, personality.

Now it is precisely this coherence which is lacking in *Le notti bianche*: one of the two dialectic elements has or seems to have disappeared, though Visconti's great talent as a director is still apparent. And why is this element — so essential to Visconti's personality, style, and vision — missing in this film? For several reasons, all inevitable. The manner in which it was produced, for example. The director, the writer, and the actors were all involved in financing the film, and not just a film but a low-cost film (that is, low, considering the director's demands) which thereby determined both the choice of a subject with only two roles requiring reliable professionals (Maria Schell and Marcello Mastroianni) and the film's very form and structure. These are theatrical, though not in a restricted and limiting sense; in any case, they are theatrical but with cinematic solutions. The film was made by following the chronological order of the sequences, on a sort of great stage, with stage scenery; and to the rotating stage, already used by Visconti when directing "Crime and Punishment," is added the rotary movement of the characters, with entrances and exits. For that matter, the screenplay is itself a true stage script (and one recalls how other writings of Dostoevski have been adapted to the stage, and how easily; because of the predominance of dialogue, they lend themselves to such adaptation); undoubtedly this is one of the reasons why it was chosen.

Though he adheres to the text and to his author because he has certain affinities for them, Visconti should have been aware of several dangers: above all, the out-of-date subject matter, not only because the story of Mario and Natalia now appears unrealistic and unacceptable to the public. Visconti has sought to frame it in the general fabric of the Dostoevskian narrative; that is, in transferring it to the present day in an anonymous Italian city, he sought to portray the tormented plebeian strata of the city and, while diverging from the psychic reality of the characters, he tried to deepen the reality which surrounds and more or less determines them. But though the locale — the Venezia section of Leghorn, well-reconstructed and excitingly rendered by a cameraman



who is a worthy pupil of G. R. Aldo — represents, allusively, one of those sections in transition between the old and the new, the tormented plebeian strata of the city are completely uniform and desolate (compared with Mario and Natalia, who are timeless): vagabonds and prostitutes form an expressionistic vision in the manner of Brecht's "Threepenny Opera"; here, what is left of Visconti's decadence has free vent, even if his intention is to create a counterpoint to the love of Mario and Natalia.

But we do not believe that one can or must consider *Le notti bianche* one of Visconti's minor films; it is, rather, an experience, a moment in the director's activity when he felt the need to unload, to free himself, perhaps once and for all, of his hereditary background (whereas this "unloading" generally takes place in his work as a theater director, excepting productions of Chekhov and a few other authors). And it is also a sort of bet: that is, he proves that he is capable — following certain unexpected and disconcerting "changes" à la Picasso, and yet remaining within the ambit of art — of making a low-cost but successful film and of developing beyond neorealism without playing the renegade.

The third tendency, finally, is seen in the new-found vigorous force among new nations, like India, for neohumanism: *Aparajito* (*The Unconquered*), the second episode in a trilogy about a Bengali family whose state is positively primitive and barbaric. The influences of the Italian cinema on Satyajit Ray are quite clear. His latest film (and only the second in his career) confirms the significance of the two influences we perceived two years ago at Cannes in *Pather panchali* (*The Song of the Road*), the first episode of the trilogy: first, the Zavattini and De Sica of *Bicycle Thief* and *The Children Are Watching Us* (and certain aspects of the Visconti of *Le terra trema*), and, second, the lyric documentary quality of Flaherty and of the Renoir of *The River*. But Ray's "universities" — in the Gorkian sense — are wider and more extensive: his humanistic sources steep their roots in the liberal culture of Tagore, begetter of the artistic reawakening of India and whose influence, as Gandhi noted, is observable throughout the nation; and Nehru's name may be added to Tagore's, because of the statesman's attitude in favor of scientific rather than literary methods, and the attention he has given to certain philosophic currents, or, better, to parts of them (it is no accident that Apu, the protagonist of the film, leaves the village for the city, and prefers scientific to literary studies).

Ray's attentiveness to these currents constitutes another of his universities (his name, by the way, augurs well: Satyajit means "conqueror of truth"): Gorki, together with Tagore and Nehru, has had a deeper influence on his personality and work than either our directors or the lyric documentarists have had. Ray does not conceal his admiration for Donskoi's Gorki trilogy, and the narrative scheme of the Bengali director's work corresponds to that trilogy. *Aparajito* is not, in fact, the story of a maternal love, of a mother who sees the withdrawal of the object of her love, but a story, or, better, part of a story, of greater scope and views: it represents a portion of the "human comedy" of modern India. Ray's artistic method in this second episode, as well as in the first, is descriptive rather than narrative (as a matter of fact, the director illustrated Bandopadhyay's books of the

same titles) and uncertainties of cinematic language are discernible here and there, though moments of great poetry are not lacking and there is an extremely apposite sound track in which music assumes a creative character in expressing situations and feelings. The final shot of Apu seated under the centuries-old tree, with its roots almost out of the ground, is unforgettable in its implied and expressed meanings: the mother is dead but there remains in the son the certainty of his having chosen the right road. The expressive language of *Le notti bianche* (awarded the Silver Lion) is more mature, more elevated, simply not to be compared with that of *Aparajito* (awarded the Gold Lion); but our preference — as well as that of the jury — is for Ray, not only for the reasons given above, but also for the reason that led Visconti (a member of last year's jury) to prefer *Calle Mayor* to *Gervaise*: "I like Bardem in particular — perhaps because he, too, has been a persecuted director and I know how difficult it is to maintain one's convictions under such circumstances."

But there is little of Gorki — or of authentic directorial talent — in *Malva*, which was adapted from one of Gorki's stories, though certainly not one of the best or most successful. Neither Tolstoy nor Chekhov liked it. This film by Braum, who died recently, may be listed among those stirrings of renewal and revision which the Soviet cinema is attempting today (though to a lesser degree than either the Polish or Hungarian cinema), but whose results are still doubtful, on the artistic level, at any rate. No "thawing" can be achieved by the, so to speak, "anarchic" tone of this work, by the lack of both narrative balance and measure.

*Kumonosu djo* (*The Throne of Blood*), which derives from another great realist, Shakespeare, is another example of Kurosawa's overly agitated, strident, and exasperated style, in which the "external" characters are once again deliberately sacrificed to a soulless spectacle. At one point only does the director, who insists on a schematic fatalism, approach true power and greatness: when, immediately after the murder of the king, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth look at themselves and measure the degree to which their souls have consented to the crime. The other Japanese entry, *Ubagurumu* (*The Baby Carriage*), is, aside from its ending, much more modest but more deeply felt and introspective. In this film, Tomotaka Tasaba returns to an important problem in his country: illicit sexual relations. The problem is certainly not solved, but the film has the value of treating it without hypocrisy, with extreme fidelity to the facts, accenting the new generation's feeling of the need to arrive at concrete solutions.

*Ubagurumu* is also taken from a novel. Only two or three of the films exhibited at the Festival were based on stories written originally for the screen. This is another element, additional to the pattern of the tendencies already noted above, to keep in mind when assessing the present condition of the world cinema.

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## ABEL GANCE AND NELLY KAPLAN THE KINGDOM OF THE EARTH (LE ROYAUME DE LA TERRE)

Extract from an original scenario for Polyvision. Copyright 1957 by the authors.

There have been frequent references in the continental press to Abel Gance's new experiments with the multiple screen technique called Polyvision. Dovzhenko, shortly before his death, called Polyvision "the cinema of the future." All this has created an interest, even a suspense, among American film-makers. To give a better understanding of the nature of Abel Gance's experiments, we are printing a sequence from the script he wrote together with Nelly Kaplan for their first Polyvision production (which is still in the planning stage). Although the content of the sequence appears tentative, the treatment of it gives us a glimpse into what Polyvision will be able to do. The translator has provided us with this summary of the technical information on Polyvision:

Polyvision reveals three aspects of a single image-idea, as one might see an object in a triple-panel mirror. The image in each panel is separate and distinct but the effect of all three images creates an impression of a simultaneous whole. Sometimes the three panels become one when the central panel is enlarged to the size of all three. Sometimes only one panel is seen. Thus, the orchestration of the film is achieved, the screen becoming, in the phrase of Gance, a "visual accordion."

Editor

### FOREWORD

At this moment, the entire world suddenly finds itself drawn into a prodigious revolution effected through the beneficial use of nuclear physics.

From now on, we must consider the atomic era as a reality, one which is producing radical changes not only in scientific thought but also in the principles of all philosophies and societies.

The objective of our film, *The Kingdom of the Earth*, stems from this revolution.

The scenario can only give a summary of the spirit of our work: whereas the atom can be described without ever having been seen, no words can translate the nuances of a film in which Polyvision with all its infinite potentialities — variable screen, fully utilized color, and Perspective Sound — fuses with the subject matter to create a unique form of expression.

The first part of the film, from which we extract the following fragment, might at first sight seem foreign to the main theme but it will quickly reveal its profound affinities, its dramatic and scientific ties, with the picture of the atomic era presented in the second part. Although the protagonists are completely transposed from



our world into a fourth dimension, they are subject to the same conflicts that confound us here and now.

As a reaction against the neurosis stirred up by the fear of the A- and H-bombs, our work proposes to sing a symphony of the joy of life by showing men that within them alone resides the power to build *The Kingdom of the Earth*.  
*Abel Gance, Nelly Kaplan*

*Quant au monde, quand tu sortiras, que sera-t-il devenue? En tous cas, rien des apparences actuelles.*

Arthur Rimbaud

### THE KINGDOM OF THE EARTH

1.

An assembly of Druids at Karnac.

While in Perspective Sound the crackling of an invisible fire mingles with the cries of men that seem to come from beneath the screen, the picture opens on an enormous and hideous skull made of openwork willow occupying the central, normal-size screen.

The frame suddenly expands into a panoramic screen three times the size of the normal screen. Thus we discover many other gigantic willow heads, all as hideous and different as heads in a carnival nightmare.

Flames rise in the foreground from the bottom of the frame as though they're trying to lick the willow monsters, which gleam with blood, while heavy clouds scud through the menacing sky behind these horrible and grotesque figures.

2.

Panoramic screen with moving camera: the extraordinary field of dolmens and menhirs\* at Karnac in the fourteenth century (which make up even today one of the most inexplicable and grandiose landscapes of rock built by man). It stretches out to infinity, surrounded by thick forests and mingling in the distance with the enormous waves of an ocean in fury.

Hundreds of Druids are there, reunited for the celebration of the Feast of the Great Storm. They are divided into two hostile clans:

The Gaulish Druids — whom we will call the Red Druids, dressed in bluish-red with hoods resembling the capes of the Bearnaise. Among them, dressed in the same fashion, are the bards who carry five-stringed "crwth" lyres and sing the invocation to the storm.

\* **Menhir**: an upright monumental stone standing either alone or as one in an avenue or circle. **Dolmen**: a remnant — consisting of two or more large stones set with a space between and capped by a horizontal stone — of a vanishing burial chamber. The ruins of these monoliths and megaliths are still visible today at Stonehenge.

The Vacies — White Druids, dressed entirely in linen, wearing winged hats of white leather. The chiefs carry branches of verbena entwined with serpents.

Some of the Red and White Druids, those heavily armed, are on horseback, the trappings of each horse being the same color as the garb of its rider.

The Red Druids wear silver masks over their faces; the White Druids, gold masks recalling those adorning Egyptian mummies. The White Druids are as immobile as statues. The Red Druids, however, in the rhythm of their chant, perform the ritual of their ardent liturgy with extraordinary harmony.

The glimmerings of the fire, whose sparks we saw in the preceding shot, redden the gold and silver masks of the two clans, while the cries, which we now hear behind us in Perspective Sound, give to the general scene a singular grandeur.

3.

Close in on a willow skull on the central screen. Side screens are red. Flames coming from the bottom of the frame rise and gradually envelop the gigantic figure.

A half-naked man, a condemned prisoner, already blackened by burns, leaps from the bottom of the frame gripping the tentacles of the willows still crackling . . . then a second man . . . then a third. (From the difference in scale between the small bodies of the victims and the huge willow heads, one now realizes the height of these enormous skulls.) Like wild beasts in a burning cage, the condemned prisoners try in vain with their burnt hands and their teeth to cut away the bars, but they retreat burnt, asphyxiated, shrieking, before the consumed willow tentacles give way.

The camera rolls back as the "accordion screen" expands to panoramic dimensions and reveals a dozen willow heads on large bodies of braided reeds. Hundreds of little black shadows, trying in vain to escape the flames, grasp at the heads of the monsters, only to fall back into the *auto-da-fé*.

The camera rolls back further while in the foreground on the side screens groups of prisoners, condemned to be garroted and surrounded by their guards, wait their

turn to be thrust into the enormous iron skirts which clothe each of the terrible monsters.

In a pewter-colored sky, a flock of cawing crows circles about them.

4.

On the outskirts of the adjoining forest. Thick and serried vegetation. Enormous, agitated trees. Two Druids of opposing clans are on watch: a Red Druid masked in silver, a White Druid masked in gold. They are armed with Frankish javelins.

In Perspective Sound, we hear behind us the shrieks of the executed criminals and the liturgical chants of the Red Druids, which seem to come, storm-tossed, from a distance of several hundred yards.

The two sentries — who from time to time are enveloped in a reddish smoke which comes from the direction of the camera — will give us a resumé of the cause for the division of the two Druidical clans.

The White Druid lifts his golden mask and looks compassionately towards the camera.

WHITE DRUID: "Five hundred unhappy ones!"

RED DRUID (lifting in turn his silver mask and wiping his forehead): "Pardon! Five hundred prisoners!"

WHITE DRUID: "It's atrocious!"

RED DRUID (sadistically): "But what a spectacle!"

WHITE DRUID: "They were defending their country!"

RED DRUID: "And we were defending our caste! We, the Red Druids, have beaten them. They're paying by fire. It's the tradition. So you, too, will pay soon, you Whites, for your neutrality in the battles we have won without you."

WHITE DRUID: "We'll see!"

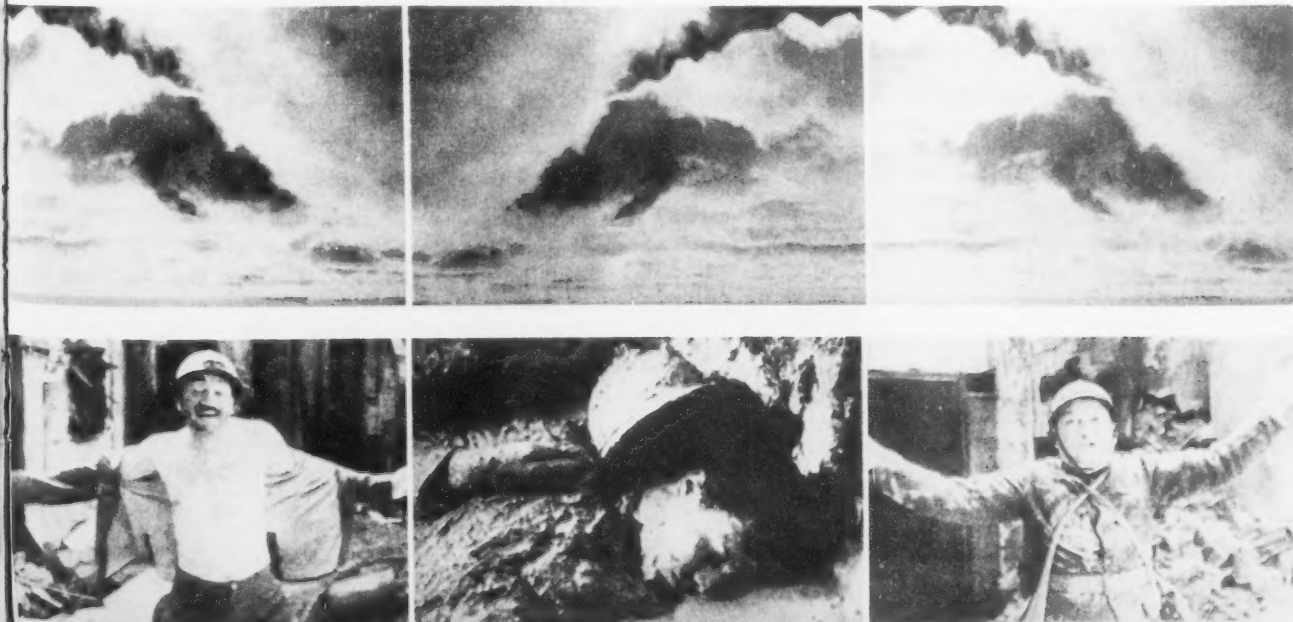
RED DRUID: "It has all been seen. Our Archdruid will not spare you."

WHITE DRUID (with scorn): "Bolg? He's a bloody fool!"

RED DRUID: "For you, the Whites, only that Belen matters."

WHITE DRUID (with admiration): "Yes, the White Druidess."

Above: *Nuages (Clouds)* by Nelly Kaplan, from *Magirama*, an experimental feature in Polyvision by Abel Gance and Nelly Kaplan. Below: A Polyvision treatment of *J'Accuse*, Abel Gance's anti-war film, from *Magirama*.



RED DRUID (ironically): "And you insist on believing that she'll dethrone Bolg?"

WHITE DRUID: "Exactly! And if she were here, with just one finger she'd stop this carnage!"

RED DRUID (his irony becomes vehement): "Yes, if she were here . . . but she was careful to leave before the Feast of the Great Storm!"

WHITE DRUID (answering in the same vehement tone, with indescribable admiration): "Fear? Belen? The White Druidess who commands the waves and the flames?"

RED DRUID (furiously): "When she's thrown into the pyre with the rest of you, then it'll be time to kneel before this famous miracle!"

WHITE DRUID (in a burst of anger): "Then *you* will kneel!"

The camera swerves quickly from the sentries to catch, on the left, two men concealed in a neighboring thicket: one of these men — because of his ostentatious costume and his manner — seems to be of noble lineage; the other is his chamberlain.

They lend an attentive ear to the discussion of the two Druids, who are looking in the direction of the *auto-da-fé*. We hear the voices of the Druids becoming increasingly excited.

VOICE OF WHITE DRUID: "Were not our Archdruids fifteen centuries ago the masters of water and fire while their power extended over half the world? And you, the Reds, you well know that Belen, alone, recovered those marvelous secrets!"

LORD (in a low voice, incredulous): "She stops at will the waves and the flames?"

CHAMBERLAIN (in a low voice): "There is no limit to the White Druidess' magic."

LORD: "You, Blanchet, defrocked Druid, who knew Belen before you were expelled from their caste, will you tell me why she is not here, since I've come only for her?"

BLANCHET: "She undoubtedly fears that Bolg will steal from her the greatest secret that a person can hold."

LORD: "Greater than the mastery of fire?"

BLANCHET: "Yes, still more extraordinary, and one which will make her mistress of space and time, affirm those who know."

LORD: "Now you exaggerate."

BLANCHET: "With Druids, sir, the most hallucinatory and unbelievable things are possible. Please, sir, let's leave!"

VOICE OF RED DRUID (more and more violently): "Your Belen is nothing but a sorceress whom we will suppress!"

VOICE OF WHITE DRUID: "You don't kill goddesses!"

The tumult increases. The Lord, in order to see, breaks a branch which obstructs his view.

Medium shot of the two Druids, who were about to trade blows. They stop suddenly at the sound of the breaking branch, and each one rapidly takes from his belt a forked oaken rod which he uses as an antenna to detect the source of the sound.

RED DRUID: "The fingers of the rod are vibrating! Strangers are listening to us!"

Close-up of the approaching Lord and of Blanchet, who pulls his master back.

BLANCHET (in a low and anguished voice): "Their

rods have disclosed our presence, sir. We're lost!"

LORD (breaking loose): "You're as cowardly as a hyena, Blanchet!"

BLANCHET (trembling): "No inquisitive person has ever attended the Feast of the Great Storm uninvited without losing his life. I warn you!"

LORD (laughing): "Aren't we sorcerers, too?"

BLANCHET: "Of course, yes. But here, Druidism devours all those who try to pry into its secrets."

The screen becomes double its normal size, revealing the two Druids, who, with their javelins in their right hands and their rods in their left, follow the inclination of the rods which directs them to the thicket where the Lord and Blanchet are hiding. Quick as lightning, the Lord, endowed with uncommon strength and agility, leaps upon the two Druids, fells and gags them — clumsily aided by the trembling Blanchet.

BLANCHET: "Let's flee, sir!"

LORD (tearing off the White Druid's robe and throwing it to Blanchet): "Disguise yourself, imbecile! I want to observe the feast as closely as possible!"

BLANCHET (terrified): "But that would mean death within minutes!"

LORD (threatening him): "Would you prefer it within seconds?"

Blanchet, trembling, rigs himself out in the White Druid's robe.

5.

General view of the Crom'lech where the largest menhirs are joined in a circle. The center of the Crom'lech is a ritual chamber open to the sky. It is there that the Archdruid Bolg, officiating head of the society, devotes himself to the strange and mysterious rites of the Center of the World. It is the sacred dwelling where only the High Priest may enter to try to blend the telluric influences from which humanity must benefit. At the center of the Crom'lech: a giant menhir, 60 feet high.

Bolg approaches. He has a flint in his hand and, in accordance with ritual, he rubs it violently against the big menhir. A long, red flame shoots out of his hands. The camera moves back to show him casting this flame at some fagots which the officiating Druids have carried to the threshold of the Crom'lech and which they carry back burning to start the fires. We see the rite from the outside, through some of the menhirs that make up the sacred chamber.

As the screen enlarges to its maximum size, we see the sky darkening with ominous clouds. The storm is rapidly approaching.

The raging sound — the liturgical chants and the cries of the victims — has been amplified during these scenes of the Crom'lech.

6.

Medium shot of the Lord and Blanchet. They are disguised from head to foot. The Lord, as a Red Druid, adjusts his silver mask; Blanchet, as a White Druid, wears a golden mask. The Lord seizes the two undressed and inert Druids and throws them, one after the other, like a couple of fagots, into the thicket. Then he advances upon the camera which rolls back while the reflection of the fire becomes more and more vivid on his mask. Blanchet remains immobile. The Lord returns to him and brings him brusquely to his feet. Blanchet begs on his knees —

BLANCHET: "Stop! Death is there, before us!"

LORD (taking out his dagger and thrusting it toward Blanchet): "The fire or this! Choose!"

Blanchet advances. Stopping again, he turns tearfully toward the Lord.

BLANCHET: "But you, sir!"

LORD (in a strange tone): "You well know that I adore fire! Come on! March!"

They advance as the brushwood around them gradually turns an ever deepening purple.

The Lord, in a close-up, stops with Blanchet. They speak in low voices. The Lord questions, pointing with his hand —

LORD: "The man in gold, there . . . who is that?"

BLANCHET (whose superstitious fear is evident in his voice): "It's Bolg! In the Crom'lech!"

LORD: "In the . . .?"

BLANCHET: "The Crom'lech, it's the sacred chamber in the midst of the magic menhirs which the giants brought back from Atlantis 20,000 years ago."

Close-up of the High Priest drawing forth the red flame from the menhir.

BLANCHET: "He's exactly at the spot where the junction of celestial and terrestrial influences takes place."

LORD: "And the flame?"

BLANCHET: "He draws it from the 'rock sprite,' which serves as a receptacle for cosmic forces."

LORD: "Let's get closer."

BLANCHET (clasping his hands): "Don't lead us to our death!"

LORD: "Forward!"

Blanchet stifles a cry and follows his master.

The wind has risen and adds its howl to the concert of cries and chants. Suddenly the Lord stops and removes his mask. He seems dazzled by the terrifying and awesome spectacle before them. Blanchet tries to lower his master's mask again. The other pushes his hand away, making him stagger — he looks.

The dance of the Druids at the foot of the pyres. The Red Druids are in a trance, in complete delirium resembling convulsions except that the movements are those of a mechanical frenzy. The White Druids, on the other hand, have their right hands over their eyes, manifesting their powerlessness and their compassion.

Alternately, the Reds and Whites in Polyvision.

BLANCHET: "Are you watching the unhappy ones?"

LORD: "No, imbecile, the flames!"

The screen bursts into a large panorama with the moving camera revealing the flames rising furiously like a sea of fire, sometimes bending to the right, sometimes to the left, before the gusts of wind.

Alternating with these sudden changes of direction of the fire and blended in counterpoint is the ballet of the Red and White Druids.

Return to the two men in close-up.

LORD: "And what is he doing now, your High Priest with his mechanical movements?"

BLANCHET: "He's trying to tame the lightning."

The Lord cannot keep from guffawing.

BLANCHET: "Don't laugh, sir. At one time our great forefathers could master the fire of the sky."

The camera dips in close-up to Bolg fearfully directing his esoteric rite toward a sky rent with lightning. Thunder rumbles.

Return to the two men.

LORD: "The lightning laughs at his incantations."

BLANCHET: "He has never found the sacred contact between the sky and himself. He knows how to extract terrestrial fire from the 'rock sprite' but fear has always prevented him from taking into his hands the fire from the sky."

LORD: "You're right, Blanchet. Here the unbelievable is true."

The camera rolls back. The Lord advances. Blanchet grabs at him.

BLANCHET: "But where are you going, sir?"

LORD: "Into the Crom'lech, as you call it."

Blanchet, afraid, stammers —

BLANCHET: "Whoever sets foot in there dies instantly!"

LORD (continuing to advance): "We'll see!"

Because of the fury of the wind, the cries, the chants, and the swirling of the leaves, and because their masks have been reddening more and more, we guess that they are nearing the Crom'lech.

The camera swiftly precedes them and suddenly rises above them. We marvel in surprise at a close-up of a golden sickle held by a hand of exceptional beauty, appearing to have been born of a dazzling bolt of lightning and surrounded by an enchanted flame of branches. Then, a little higher, we see a blossoming mistletoe pinned on a magnificent, half-nude woman's breast. The camera rises still higher and discovers a woman's face of radiant beauty. Suddenly the lateral screens unfold, showing us the same face as on the central screen but from two different angles, and we have a feeling of simultaneous ubiquity through this triple-faceted view of the extraordinary countenance. The background of rustling foliage blown by the wind, the purple flashes filtering through the clouds of smoke that crown her head, the beautiful blond hair cascading down over the transparent muslin that drapes her bust — we are enthralled as the three cameras travel back simultaneously, revealing the goddess of the forest in all her splendor.

7.

Suddenly the young woman looks down, hesitates a moment, and, with the grace of a bird, leaps into space.

The camera follows her as she descends into the visual field where the two men are walking. They stop in amazement.

The Lord draws his dagger, but before the beauty of this strange woman, the weapon falls from his hands.

Blanchet drops to his knees, petrified with fear and admiration.

She looks at the Lord, smiles almost imperceptibly, and is preceded by the camera as she prances like a deer through the red forest in the direction of the Sacred Chamber, leaving the two stunned men behind her.

Close-up of the two men.

BLANCHET (as if in a dream): "Belen!"

LORD (repeating in a low voice): "She rules over flames and waves . . ."

BLANCHET: "Oh, look!"

He points to the ground.

Close-up of Belen's phosphorescent footprints in the earth.

LORD: "Now I believe you, Blanchet!"

(To be continued)

TRANSLATED BY H. G. W.



## GERVAISE

Directed by René Clément from the script by Jean Aurenche and Pierre Bost, based on Emile Zola's "L'Assommoir." Produced by Annie Dorfmann; distributed in the U.S. by Continental Distributing, Inc. Music, Georges Auric; camera, Robert Juillard; sets, Paul Bertrand; editor, Henri Rust. In the cast: Maria Schell, François Périer, Suzy Delair, Jany Holt, Jacques Harden, and others.

As a film version of Zola's "L'Assommoir," *Gervaise* emerges as the finest rendering of a literary classic the cinema has given us since David Lean's Dickens films. In its own right, it is an impressive work, the full and eloquent statement of a director at the peak of his technical powers. *Gervaise* is René Clément's first film since *Monsieur Ripois*, and in it are detectable a certain strengthening of moral commitment and a sure grasp of issues, that had been absent from the former film, an otherwise absorbing and technically brilliant study of philandering. In bringing the novel to the screen Clément and his adapters, the perennial Aurenche and Bost, have intentionally deepened the psychological penetration of the original, thus emphasizing themes of personal morality and degradation at the expense of Zola's scientifically observed determinism. As the title indicates, the film version is less a tract on alcoholism than a study of the central character. *Gervaise's* victimization and destruction are brought on, one is made to feel, not so much by the remorseless grind of her way of life, as by the fatal susceptibility of her temperament to the violations of others. In its portrait of cold opportunism at work upon an essentially decent nature and in its merciless survey of human appetites fouled by evil conditions, Clément's film achieves a dimension of the universal.

Zola's heroine is fatefully conceived. Deserted by her lover for another woman, *Gervaise* and her two fatherless children are rescued by an amiable roofer, Coupeau. Their happy marriage suffers when an accident on the job causes him to retire into drunkenness and dissipation. *Gervaise* goes heavily into debt to run a little hand laundry, but her lover returns, forms an unholy alliance with her husband, and moves in on the Coupeau household.

As center and sole support of this *menage à trois*, *Gervaise* sinks further into poverty and despair; her final defeat comes when Coupeau, in a drunken frenzy, destroys the laundry. His death now releases her. But *Gervaise* is beaten; she numbly abandons herself to drink, and her child, Nana, to the streets.

As an adaptation, the film marvelously captures the multiplicity of character and incident, the texture, the steaming flavor, of its source. As in all of Zola, the senses are persistently engaged; paroxysms of horror and bestiality — the common lot and response of Zola's people — are reached and, in Clément's rendering, surpassed: the sickening slide of Coupeau down a roof and the descent upon him of a pan of burning coals, the serio-comic animalism of the brawl in the public laundry, the unbearable seizures that precede Coupeau's death. And, like an astringent wash over all, the full strength of the ironic imagination: the clapping parade of the workers through the Louvre, the party scene with its carefully placed climax, the children at their suggestive play, the grunt of the lover as he fishes up hairpins from his tumbled bed, and the whole of the final scene with Nana, her unforgettable gaze already dissolute. Some of this action is translated from the novel, some of it is frankly interpolated. In all instances, the effect is characteristic of Zola, and unremittingly visceral.

Other adjustments are made in the interests of psychology (where, by reason of his absorption in external phenomena, Zola faltered) and serve to heighten the intrinsic dramatic conflicts. Gouget, the blacksmith, is here an improvement upon Zola's simple giant. He is less a symbol of *Gervaise's* yearning after beauty and decency than the one *animus*, the living and influential presence upon which she depends. The political radicalism of Etienne Lantier, the lover, is transferred to Gouget, and an episode is introduced in which he is imprisoned for instigating a strike — at a critical moment in *Gervaise's* life. Later, having succumbed to Lantier and thereby betrayed their mutual trust, she tries to lie to Gouget, but fails, and their bonds are shattered.

This revision (in the novel, *Gervaise's* backsliding causes a gradual estrangement) indicates a deliberate refinement of motive, imparting a certain depth and complexity to Zola's somewhat static characters and freeing them from the traits of determinism. If license in this case seems abused, it nevertheless reveals that the adapters have taken the full measure of their material. Zola — like Richardson, Swift, Kafka, and Fitzgerald — was one of those writers who, through pain, confusion or dogmatism, often do not realize the full implications of their subjects. The adapter's approach must then be that of the critic, even the cryptographer. Zola's writing is colored by half-articulated suggestions; his attitude toward these inhabitants of slums and mining districts frequently seems that of a confounded aristocrat, and one feels that, despite his valuable insights into the facts and consequences of environmental terrorism, he rather holds his characters accountable for their misery. There is also in him a sense of revulsion that leads him to minimize their sensitivity as people. The characters in the film, then, have an autonomy that Zola possibly would never allow, and, together, they strike an appositely modern note. Aurenche and Bost have managed a perfect adaptation; its economy and perception stand as a relief from *The Sun Also Rises*, *Moby Dick*, *War and*

Peace, and most filmed novels that claim fidelity to their sources.

With so much of the emphasis on character, the actors inevitably share a heavy responsibility. Maria Schell's portrait of Gervaise is perhaps overly romantic. Her playing is slow, deliberate, self-absorbed. She undeniably provides the film with a central radiance, a roseate heroism, but this is an effect based more on sheer personality than on an identity with Zola's work-coarsened, dishonored laundress. She catches much of Gervaise's weak complaisance, her sapling will, but her response is too often poignant where it should be philosophical, and somehow too independent of the Gallic context. There will be those who will detect behind her performance the old sado-masochistic specter of Emil Jannings; but it must be said that the intelligence of the script commits Gervaise to some sort of new stature, and this interpretation is the actress's solution. In any case, Gervaise remains a figure of rather magnificent pathos, even in final degradation.

François Périer brilliantly reinforces Clément's reading of Coupeau. His initial warmth declines gradually to sotted geniality, thence to brute perfidy; and his humiliation at the hands of Lantier (summed up by Clément in one long shot in which Coupeau is seen carrying Lantier's trunk on his back) creates the precise emotional setting for his collapse. Suzy Delair, as Virginie, Gervaise's enemy, seems at first too sophisticated for the elemental milieu, but her manner, at once carnal and citified, finds its proper agreement with the active cynicism of Armand Mestral's Lantier.

This is a film to watch closely and to revisit. Its elaborate *mise en scène* — the rain-rinsed streets, the interiors with their litter of objects — forcefully recalls daguerreotypes and the early exposures of the Lumières. The final impression is that Clément in recreating "L'Assommoir" has not only preserved the novel's meaning but, by locating and strengthening its climaxes, has triumphed over it.

ARLENE CROCE

## THE YOUNG STRANGER

Directed by John Frankenheimer. From a script by Robert Dozier. Produced by Stuart Millar. Camera, Robert Plank; editors, Robert Swink and Edward Biery; music, Leonard Rosenman. In the cast: James MacArthur, James Daly, Kim Hunter, James Gregory, and others.

One of those American films that intrigue Europeans beyond their artistic merits because they afford a glimpse into more intimate preoccupations than the usual slick exports. Though at times clumsy and naive, this film is made with an almost documentary conscientiousness and possibly contributes more towards understanding the "generation without a cause" than some of its more spectacular predecessors. Before this, the accent had been on violence — here is some of the vacuousness under that violence.

The Ditmar family may be classed in the upper income bracket but their problem is universal, one that fills the offices of probation officers, psychiatric social workers, marriage counselors. "Somewhere along the line they got off the tracks" and now they look to the expert for directions, as if life were a mapped-out road to be followed.

The plot is trifling; it is the relations among the characters that are revealing. Hal (James MacArthur) is an average American adolescent, externally adult, sophistic-

ated, detached, but in fact existing in a haze of confused impulses because he does not know what is expected of him. When he comes home from school, the refrigerator is the one thing he knows he can count on. His parents are giving a cocktail party as usual and Hal is not welcome in his dirty blue jeans. Dad's only way of communicating with junior is nagging criticism. There is an excellent moment when Mr. Ditmar (James Daly) picks out a jacket for Hal from his vast wardrobe. It is an expensive jacket — but the wrong size. Hal does not know just what he wants of his father but this is certainly not it. The mixture of utter bad faith and easy good intentions in Ditmar's gesture sums up the ambiguity of his character. He honestly believes himself a good father and husband because he is a good provider; however, his emphasis on providing, like the "overtime" of so many fathers, is simply an escape not only from moral responsibility but from any close psychological contact with another person. When his wife (Kim Hunter), after years of resigned drifting apart, tries to have a heart-to-heart talk with him about their son . . . Dad does not listen. He can, with effort, look her in the face in a display of apparent candor and good will, but he is not really there at all: he is unseizable, unreachable. This exasperating person who slips through one's fingers because, despite his outward dignity, he has no inward substance is a much more honest and perspicacious portrayal of a father than the ignobly caricatured sop of, say, *Rebel Without a Cause*.

Hal is obsessed with the need to have his father believe his word, trust being his one contact with his father to whom he looks also for values and the key to reality. He cries out in anguish that he has never known "what Dad wanted of him" . . . but Dad does not know either, for he is just as much lost in this maze, this moral limbo.

Lacking understanding, or values, or a common function to bind them, these strangers reach for one another in the desperate hope that a person-to-person relation will cheat the inner and outer voids. "But Hal, your father loves you!" is perhaps the most pathetic sentence in the whole film. "Love" — the magic word that is supposed to make everything all right! But without context, without values . . . Mrs. Ditmar can repeat it till the end of time: it will remain an abstraction. And though the film ends "happily" with a maudlin, smiling reconciliation of father and son, who go off arm in arm to gambol in their world of somewhat jaded six-year-olds, that smile peters out (off-screen) and what's left is the image of an amoral society of lonely individuals floundering about without hope or understanding. . .

An encouraging "prise de conscience" on the part of a very youthful team.

COLINETTE LEITCH

## OTHER RECENT RELEASES

THAT NIGHT. Directed by John Newland from the script by Robert Wallace and Jack Rowles. Produced by Himan and Mende Brown. Released by Universal-International. In the cast: John Beal, Augusta Dabney, Malcolm Brodrick, Dennis Kohler, and others.

Probably the first film to focus attention on the immediate causes and long-range implications of a heart attack on its victim and his family. This is a worthy project from a social standpoint, but only an average achievement artistically.

LE MYSTÈRE PICASSO. Directed by H. G. Clouzot, photographed by Claude Renoir. With music by Georges

Auric. Released in the U.S. by Lopert Films, Inc.

Clouzot, with his first film on art, demonstrates the proper technique for a cinematic study of a painter. An unforgettable experience for both art-lovers and film enthusiasts.

**TIME LIMIT.** Directed by Karl Malden, from the script by Henry Denker, based on the play by Mr. Denker and Ralph Berkey. A Heath (Richard Widmark-William Reynolds) production, released by United Artists. Camera, Sam Leavitt; editor, Aaron Stell; music, Fred Steiner. In the cast: Richard Widmark, Richard Basehart, Dolores Michaels, June Lockhart, Carl Benton Reid, and others.

Karl Malden's first directorial assignment on the themes of "brainwashing" and "collaboration" in Chinese prison camps. Malden's crisp style does not yet have any personal quality. Film is handicapped by unduly melodramatic revelations.

**LES GIRLS.** Directed by George Cukor from a script by John Patrick. Produced by Sol C. Siegel, released by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. Camera, Robert Surtes; editor, Ferris Webster; songs, Cole Porter. In the cast: Gene Kelly, Mitzi Gaynor, Kay Kendall, Taina Elg, Jacques Bergerac, and others.

New Gene Kelly musical saddled down with *Rashomon* plot of two show girls with conflicting stories in court. Undistinguished Cole Porter score and lack of one brilliant, show-stopping dance number handicaps film, and keeps it well below standard of *Singing in the Rain* and *The Bandwagon*.

**AND GOD CREATED WOMAN.** Directed by Roger Vadim from the script by Mr. Vadim and R. J. Levy. Produced by Mr. Levy, released in the U.S. by Kingsley International. In the cast: Brigitte Bardot, Curt Jurgens.

Brigitte Bardot as a wanton creature of nature driving men mad on the Riviera. The most absurd caricature of sex since Theda Bara.

**THE TIN STAR.** Directed by Anthony Mann from the script by Dudley Nichols. Produced by William Perlberg-George Seaton, released by Paramount. Camera, Loyal Griggs; editor, Alma Macrorie; music, Elmer Bernstein. In the cast: Henry Fonda, Anthony Perkins, Betsy Palmer, Michel Ray, Neville Brand, John McIntire, and others.

The *High-Noon* influence goes on and on. Henry Fonda and Tony Perkins are excellent in this latest chronicle of moral doubt in the once unflinching West.

**NO DOWN PAYMENT.** Directed by Martin Ritt from the script by Philip Yordan (from John McPartland's novel). Produced by Jerry Wald, released by Twentieth Century-Fox. Camera, Joseph La Shelle; music, Leigh Harline; editor, Louis Loeffler. In the cast: Joanne Woodward, Sheree North, Tony Randall, Jeffrey Hunter, Cameron Mitchell, Patricia Owens, Barbara Rush, Pat Hingle, and others.

Hollywood's attempt to show life in suburbia. The film grapples with some real issues — installment psychology, residential prejudice of "nice" people, church-going conformity, money values — along with some sensational plot twists involving sex and alcohol. Film collapses in incredibly melodramatic solution. In the large cast, Joanne Woodward stands out for her performance as an insecure wife who wants to be a mother.

**ACROSS THE BRIDGE.** Directed by Ken Annakin, from the script by Guy Elmes and Denis Freeman, based on the story by Graham Greene. Produced by John Stafford, released by The Rank Organization. Camera, Reginald Wyer; art director, Cedric Dawe; editor, Alfred Roome. In the cast: Rod Steiger, David Knight, Maria Landi, Noel Willman, Bill Nagy, and others.

A chase thriller with a promising first part and a weak denouement. Graham Greene's atmosphere and moral torment is captured at moments, but the film's main asset is Rod Steiger's strong character performance.

**LE NOTTE DI CABIRIA.** Directed by Federico Fellini from the script by Mr. Fellini, Ennio Flaiano and Tullio Pinelli. Produced by Dino de Laurentiis, distributed in the U.S. by Lopert Films, Inc.

To be reviewed in our January issue.

## JERRY WALD ON FILMED AUTHORS

Dear Mr. Mekas:

With reference to your editorial comments in the October issue of *FILM CULTURE*, I would like to clarify that my mention of Herman Wouk's "Marjorie Morningstar" was not to point to the author as an example of the best of contemporary writers — rather simply to refer to his book as an example of a recent novel dealing with a phase of contemporary life. I feel that, regardless of your attitude toward Mr. Wouk's merits as a writer, he did capture in that book the conflict between certain Old World traditions and life today in these United States.

As for producers in Hollywood not having heard of writers like William Styron, James Gould Cozzens, Walter van Tilburg Clark, etc., I think you will find that, on the contrary, a number of us are very aware of these writers and the contribution they can make to motion pictures. It is unfair to state that the entire body of writers who make American literature of the mid-century is still untapped. Two novels by Walter van Tilburg Clark have been filmed: "The Ox-bow Incident" and "The Track of the Cat"; and Cozzens' "Guard of Honor" and "By Love Possessed" have been purchased for filming.

I have long been interested in bringing the work of Styron, Bellow and Auchincloss to the screen and have been in touch with these writers about the possibility. In film production, which is necessarily a commercial enterprise, there are many factors that are liable to prevent a producer from doing what he wants. Nevertheless, I am confident that we may yet see "The Long March," "The Adventures of Augie March" and "The Law of the Lion" and others of the same calibre adapted for the screen.

In addition to the authors you mentioned, what about the works of William Faulkner, Carson McCullers, John P. Marquand and Tennessee Williams, whom I think we may safely say are important contributors to American literature of the mid-century. Part of the works of all of these writers has already been filmed. We are currently making William Faulkner's *The Long, Hot Summer*, based on his "The Hamlet," and early next year "The Sound and the Fury," generally regarded as Mr. Faulkner's most important novel, will be filmed.

Authors whose work I have scheduled for future filming include D. H. Lawrence, Romain Rolland, the distinguished contemporary English writer R. C. Hutchinson, and Anton Myrer, the young American writer. That all of them are serious literary artists I am sure you will agree, and their work will most certainly make a fine contribution to motion pictures.

It is true that we need to inject new blood into the American cinema and experiment with new themes and forms. Since television is now providing the public with a steady diet of mediocrity, I think the creative people in the film industry will more and more realize the necessity, even from an economic viewpoint, of making exceptional films which television, caught in a web of sponsor and network taboos, cannot touch upon. The future of motion pictures in this sense is most promising and I am certain we will see the work of such distinguished writers as you mention brought to the screen more and more.

JERRY WALD



## COFFEE, BRANDY & CIGARS XXVIII

HERMAN G. WEINBERG

Every sentence I utter must be understood not as an affirmation but as a question.

— NIELS BOHR

*The Ten Commandments* continues to make martyrs. After stealing a car, a man dropped in one night to see the biblical epic. Having thought the picture over, he told the judge to whom he surrendered, "I vowed to go straight from then on and to turn myself in." The man's record showed three previous convictions for driving stolen cars across state lines. The judge, in the story reported by *Variety*, "took note of the surrender, and of the film's apparent effect, but said: 'I have a duty to society . . .' The man is now serving five years."

At the time of the Nazi-Soviet pact, Von Ribbentrop came to Moscow. The Russians wanted to decorate Moscow with pictures of Hitler and swastikas but couldn't find any. They didn't want to offend their new ally and were very anxious to put on a show. Someone suddenly remembered that they were making an anti-Nazi film, *Professor Mamlock*, at the time, so they went to the studio, gathered up the supply of Hitler pictures and swastika flags that were being used in the picture and decorated Moscow with them for the Ribbentrop visit.

Altho' we must all be grateful to the Museum of Modern Art for its current retrospective German film cycle, with what has been omitted one could present another such cycle every bit as distinguished, so rich was the German film before 1933. Among the notable omissions: *Siegfried*, *Variety*, *Feust*, *Metropolis*, *Waxworks*, *Kameradschaft*, *Dreigroschenoper*, *Blue Angel*, etc.

There will be a Dietrich cycle at the Museum in the spring of 1958 with a rare chance to see the stunning *Devil is a Woman* again. Oh for a print in its original pristine state!

Recommended: Dick Kraft's chatty and amusing animadversions in his pamphlet, "Kraft on Film," by one of the cinema's most passionate zealots and surely one of its most dedicated "keepers of the flame."

After thirty years of seeing *Caligari*, I recently noticed a puff of cigar (or cigarette?) smoke inadvertently blown into the scene where the man suspected of committing the murders actually committed by Cesare is taken up a flight of stairs to the police station. It comes from the bottom left of the frame. At last, a delightfully human touch in the making of this almost inhuman film!

A weird encounter I shall never forget was discussing *Caligari* with a man I met at a showing of it at the Baronet Theatre in New York some years ago. He turned out to be, of all people, Hans Janowitz, co-scenarist with Carl Mayer of the film! Out of the blue like that, it was enough to give one the heebie-jeebies. He told me he would have preferred the story as he and Mayer originally wrote it, without the "frame" story of the insane asylum. (The latter was Fritz Lang's idea.) Janowitz was then in the import-export business, of all things, and promised to do several articles of reminiscences, at my pleading, but death cruelly and tragically intervened.

Speaking of triple-screens, as Abel Gance does elsewhere in this issue, you'll find a surprisingly apt use of

it for a brief moment in, of all pictures, *Kiss Them For Me*.

Poor Boccherini! His seraphic "Minuet" has been used as a symbol of sexual lubricity in two recent films, *Sins of Casanova* and *Pal Joey*, the latter compounding the felony by jazzing it up like a musical equivalent of "Spanish fly."

Why doesn't someone do a film on Nijinsky and his mentor, the saturnine Diaghilev, against a background of the Ballet Russe during its florescence in Paris before and during World War I? What a film it could make if the right people made it!

The adage that one picture is worth a thousand words was epically refuted by *War and Peace*, where, after four hours of pictures in which no statement was made, it was necessary to close with a quote from Tolstoy in order to give the film a point.

All the palaver about films being the best international good will ambassadors to make for mutual understanding between nations sounds fatuous indeed in the face of history's two greatest wars during the film's brief lifetime, not to mention the rest of the assorted blood-lettings that have soaked the earth since the parturition of the cinema.

The aesthetic of big screens *per se* is that of the home of the fabulous Texas oil tycoon H. L. Hunt — a copy of George Washington's home at Mount Vernon that is five times the size of the original.

Ah, the movies, the romantic movies! Max Ophuls peopled the bagnio of Madame Tellier with as delectable a bevy of *houris* as one could wish in his *Le Plaisir*, but when the contemporary caricaturist Steinlen depicted them in a drawing, "Chez Mme. Tellier," they were a lot fatter, homelier, and less appetizing. However, an actual photograph \* of the Madame (whom Maupassant immortalized in his famous story) and her flock shows them in reality to have been brutish enough in their ugliness to have frightened even Dracula.

Propos Dracula, Murnau got the title for *Nosferatu* from Bram Stoker's novel, "Dracula." It is an east European word meaning the "undead," beings "in limbo," who must practice vampirism to keep from perishing. The legend is a Balkan one but it appears to be more than a legend. References to actual cases pop up everywhere. Ben Hecht made a fleeting reference to a female vampire as an actuality in *Specter of the Rose*.

Not only is *A King in New York* not Chaplin's "swan song," but he is currently engaged on two other projects besides his autobiography: writing and synchronizing a musical score for *The Circus*, which he plans to reissue, and preparing for his next picture, a comedy about divorce in which European and American attitudes will be contrasted.

Of all places to find the theme of René Clair's *Les belles de nuit* (*Beauties of the Night*) "echoed," Macaulay's "History of England" would seem to be one of the least likely, yet: "Those who compare the age in which their lot has fallen with a golden age which exists only in imagination may talk of degeneracy and decay; but no man who is correctly informed as to the past will be disposed to take a morose or desponding view of the present."

The new hit play, "Look Back in Anger," directed by FILM CULTURE'S London correspondent, Tony Ri-

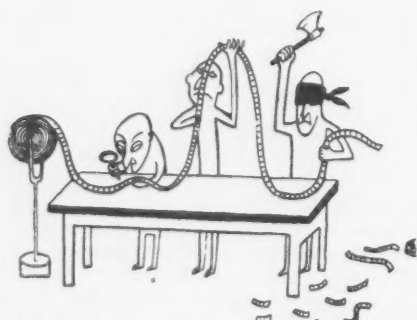
\* Francis Steegmuller's "Maupassant: A Lion in the Path."

chardson, is a scathing and brilliant work, recommended to all FC readers. Also recommended: William Saroyan's "The Cave Dwellers," a fable of our time that brings a glow of enchantment to the Broadway theater again and for which we have, alas, no counterpart on the screen today.

Some of the fabulous Henri Langlois' promises, made when he was here recently: to restore some 3,000 newly discovered feet to *Nosferatu*; to re-edit the three different versions he has of *Foolish Wives* into a single film, thereby making it more complete than ever before; to salvage the footage Eisenstein shot for *Bezhin lug* and Part II of *Ivan the Terrible* and bring them to the Cinémathèque in Paris (from the film archives in the USSR where, contrary to all rumors, they supposedly still exist); to re-edit Parts I and II of *The Wedding March* according to the notes Stroheim gave him based on the original script; to also bring to Paris the portion of *Ivan*, Part III, that Eisenstein shot in color before his death; and, most fantastic of all, to trace down the ubiquitous rumor (this time from West Germany) of a so-called "complete" print of *Greed*. (This latter is beginning to be as legendary as the Hindu rope trick.) In any case: in God's ear!

In No. XIX of this column (FILM CULTURE, No. 4, Summer, 1955), I stated that the interpretation Von Sternberg gave the second horizontal bar in the Russian Orthodox double-barred crucifix (in *The Scarlet Empress*) was as the footrest of Christ on the cross. It remained for my daughter Gretchen to challenge this by reminding me that the Russian Orthodox cross has *three* bars, the short top one representing the mocking legend placed over Christ's head, with the bottom bar slanted to recall Christ's pressing down with his foot in anguish. (And, in fact, Von Sternberg's crucifixes *did* have three bars, whose functions were correctly depicted in the film. Their symbolism is, of course, traditional.)

Which reminds me of the ravishing last shot in Stroheim's *The Merry Widow* with its enormous crucifix in the cathedral during the nuptials of Prince Danilo and Sally, a crucifix with its agonized Christ extending from what appears to be the floor to the ceiling of the huge, vaulted interior, occupying the whole left side of the screen. Was there ever such a crucifix? And, if not, doesn't Grierson's phrase "the creative interpretation of reality" find one of its most eloquent illustrations here? There is a lot more to be said for this extraordinarily bizarre and sardonic comedy of *moeurs* which has both baffled and infuriated those who have taken its "eccentricities" literally . . . but that will have to wait for another day.



CENSOR'S OFFICE (From "Cinema Nuovo")

#### THE GERMAN CYCLE

On October 24 the Museum of Modern Art in New York opened a cycle of German films under the general title "Past and Present: a Selection of German Films, 1896-1957." I worked on the preparation of the cycle to a certain extent and may say a few words about it while it is still comparatively new.

The present retrospect — scheduled to run about three months, through January 22 — was prepared under certain difficulties, which prevent it from being as comprehensive as the Museum's recent four-month French cycle. Not nearly as many films were available to represent the several periods, and for various reasons it was not feasible to show some of the interesting films which were available.

Still it is satisfying that the cycle has been realized, and in it we can see a number of films, old and new, which either have never been seen in this country before or have not been seen here for perhaps a generation.

Among the silent films there are some extremely important titles. I think myself that unquestionably the major work here is Jessner's *Backstairs*, an utterly overpowering film. It was Jessner's first film, and presumably Paul Leni had more to do with it than just the design of the sets. Whatever its true authorship, it is one of the great films — both of Germany and of the world.

Von Gerlach's *The Chronicle of the Gray House* is only represented by an excerpt but it certainly should be seen. Then there is a fairly long print (though apparently not complete) of Lang's *Spies*, plus three other films of the late Twenties: May's *Asphalt*, Schwarz's *The Wonderful Lie of Nina Petrowna*, and Pabst's *Diary of a Lost Girl*.

The sound period up until the end of World War II does not come off well. There are some interesting films, but as a whole they are not particularly representative and there are hardly any great rarities among them.

Considerable emphasis has been placed upon the postwar films; counting *The Captain From Koepenick* (which was shown the night of the opening, October 23), there are fifteen titles announced, some of them made within the past two or three years. Many of these, of course, will be new to this

country and it will be interesting to see them.\*

Personally, I feel it is regrettable that more of the available little-known silent films are not on the program, in place of such familiar stand-bys as *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* and *The Last Laugh*. The possibilities include: the fascinating Paul Wegener film *The Lost Shadow*, based on the Hoffmann tale; two wonderful films by Grune, *The Brothers Schellenberg* and *At the Edge of the World*; and Berger's *A Waltz Dream*. But it was not to be.

In concluding this comment, I feel I should point out that there is a distressingly large number of serious errors in the program notes. No doubt some of them are due to the pressure under which the notes were prepared, but I think they should not be overlooked.

Aside from misspellings, there are old credits and dates which newer reference material indicates are wrong. Among these are the credits and dates on *Don Juan's Wedding* and *Misunderstood*, and the traditional citing of "1919" and "Decla-Bioscop" for *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* when the correct data are 1920 and Decla. There is the statement that Jessner made only one film, although he made at least two others besides *Backstairs*. There are listed in the cast of *Warning Shadows* the mythical names of "Mizzi Lyda" and "Harold Lenta." These strange names were for some reason used in the old American print instead of the names of Ruth Weyher and Gustav von Wangenheim. (I well remember discussing this point with Theodore Huff back in 1940-41.) Then there is the date of "1922" for *Warning Shadows* when it should be 1923, and the date of "1923" for *Gray House* when it should be — at least for release — 1925. Finally, there is the no doubt accidental but still most unfortunate credit of "Decla-Bioscop" for the celebrated *Passion*. *Passion* was a Ufa film, the Ufa film: it opened Ufa's big show-case, the Ufa Palast-am-Zoo, and Decla-Bioscop cannot claim it.

KIRK BOND

#### THE FRENCH CYCLE

An estimate of a film cycle is influenced by the aims of the selection. In his introduction to the program notes of "60 Years of French Film" at the Museum of Modern Art, Richard Griffith, Curator of the Film Library, explains that the initial aim of the exhibition — a historical retrospect — has given way to an exhibition of those films "... which have stood the years triumphantly on intrinsic merit." Other films, Griffith continues, are omitted because they are enjoying successful commercial revival; while others are included because they are available in their original, complete form for the first time in the United States, or for the first time here in many years. He concludes: "The exhibition is thus not an historical exegesis but a grouping in rough chronological order of some of the best examples of all the main streams of French film art." This is reasonable enough and disarms an ultra-critical approach from the lofty vantage-point of the historian. And there is a plenitude of worthy and heretofore unseen classics in the listings to insure this a stimulating endeavor by any yardstick. But, while propounding my share of praise, I should also like to vent certain disappointments and exceptions, plus the usual bad temper tantrums befitting a star-crossed lover of old celluloid.

It was presumed during the final planning stages that films long familiar to revival audiences would properly be replaced by rarer material. While the Museum resisted the temptation to clog the cycle with a vast number of "popular" milestones which always draw crowds, no matter how often they are re-

\* ED. NOTE: Unfortunately, the films chosen to represent post-war Germany have been taken from the West zone only. Since some of the best postwar films have come from the East zone — the films of Wolfgang Staudte, Kurt Maetzig, Slatan Dudow, Kurt Jung-Alsen, for instance — this retrospect isn't at all representative. In addition, the selections show a lack of discrimination and an excessive emphasis on commercial products. The inclusion of such routine schmalz as *Die goldene Pest*, *Wie ein Sturmwind*, *Ohne dich wird es Nacht sein*, and *Reaching for the Stars*, can be understood (not excused, though) when one learns that this retrospect was co-sponsored by the Export-Union of the West German film industry.

J. M.

surrected — *La Femme du Boulanger*, *La Kermesse Héroïque*, *La Grande Illusion*, etc. — there are still too many familiar works which should have been allowed to rest on the shelf in lieu of films practically unknown. *Fièvre*, *La Souriante Madame Beudet*, *La Belle Equipe*, *Jeux Interdits* are some; I criticize their inclusion not on the grounds of merit but simply because they are known, having been commercially revived or listed by the Museum in prior retrospections. I have no quarrel, on the other hand, with the programming of those films which are around in cut versions but are here unveiled in complete form: *Le Sang d'un Poète*, *La Maternelle*, *La Règle du Jeu*, etc. It is to the Museum's credit that these items may now be viewed in their entirety.

Of the 38 programs, only two were relegated to the great primitive period. The longer the cycle, the greater the opportunity for the infrequent attendee at the shows to sample the gold of a specific period. If six programs rather than two were allotted to the pioneer era, there would be that much more chance for the casual stranger to become inculcated with the charm and verve of Méliès, Cohl, Zecca, Durand and Co. As it stands, by the third program we are already in the advanced year of 1913.

How useless it is, continually inveighing against the too-fast projection of silent films! It has apparently been decided by the powers-that-be to run off all, or practically all, silents at 24 frames per second (sound speed). This is not my idea of paying service to art, history or ethics, but I have a headache from banging my head so regularly against the stone hearts of the policy-makers. Let it be stated, however, that I am sick unto death of Nadia Sibirskaia being forced to perambulate like a wild woman in *Menilmontant* by dint of the director in the projection booth instead of Kirsanov. What would Delluc think, he so conscious of screen rhythm, of the zipped-up tempo of *Fièvre*? I doubt too that Feyder would approve the way his lovely controlled flow of images is distorted in *Les Nouveaux Messieurs*.

Arthur Kleiner, as is his wont, contributes to the success of any silent film with his fidelity in securing source material when possible, his thoughtful arrangement of the score, and his playing itself. He has been attacked by some for not stressing the bravura in his accompaniments: there are those who feel he does not "help" the film sufficiently; his support is too tame, they say. I can't agree. To me, Kleiner maintains that precise balance which, without care, degenerates into bad taste. I am not sure, on the other hand, that I am in accord with his decision to drop the original score of *Un Chien Andalou* and substitute another. This may be good taste misapplied. Kleiner avers that the original score was "crazy," larded as it was with a heavy dose of mock-Wagner and mercifully using obvious, sentimental drawing-room melody during inopportune moments. Perhaps — but it is a planned craziness... a surrealist madness... an integral part of the picture's design.

Following the curator's introduction, John Adams supplies the notes in the printed brochure. These sometimes present a summary of the plot, sometimes a capsule aesthetic-historic comment, sometimes both. Several comments are highly questionable, such as the one which postulates that *La Dixième Symphonie* (1918) is "A French refinement of D. W. Griffith's style..." Gance appears to me to have grown artistically from the seeds of his own genius and I consider this declaration out of order, particularly when one remembers that several French critics have reported that the American master's films did not arrive in France until about 1920. It has become the custom in judging any significant European craftsmanship of this time which divulges advanced screen technique to decide, rather carelessly, that it *must* have been influenced by Griffith. The one-line estimate of *Le Million* as "A musical about a chase across Paris to recover a winning lottery ticket" is basic description with a vengeance; it is comparable to saying that *The Birth of a Nation* is a melodrama about the Civil War, or that the story of Adam and

Eve is a triangle about a man, a woman, and a snake. Conversely, when Mr. Adams writes that *Coeur Fidele* is "An essay in the development of film content created by juxtaposing photographs rich in tactile impressions," I don't for the life of me grasp what he is trying to convey.

The absence of a supreme Gance film is a major weakness of the cycle. *La Dixième Symphonie* contains skill and power, but is more in the aspect of apprentice work. One reacts to its inclusion as one would react if *Judith of Bethulia* were the sole Griffith in an American surveillance: Glad to see you, but where's *The Birth of a Nation*, *Intolerance*, *Way Down East* or *Broken Blossoms*? . . . Glad to see you, but where's *La Roue*, *J'Accuse*, *Napoléon* or *Fin du Monde*?

Among other gaps may be mentioned the omission of early French newsreels (albeit it can be argued that this type of footage is included in *Paris 1900*); no French propaganda films of World War I; and the annoying lack of the silent French historical spectacle which enjoyed quite a vogue: *Miracle des Loups*, *Violettes Impériales* and *Tournoi Dans La Cité* are examples of this school. Cavalcanti is a renowned silent director who missed out on this cycle, though his *Rien Que Les Heures* has been presented by the Museum in the past and is no doubt available to film societies. Other important silent directors whose work has never been shown by the Museum and whose acquaintanceship would have been welcomed are Jacques de Baroncelli and Léon Poirier. Additional artists whose work is unknown on this side of the Atlantic can be cited: Léonce Perret, Loïe Fuller, Henri Roussel, Diamant-Berger are a few — directors, alas, who, as far as this country is concerned, are only names in history books. It cannot be stated too emphatically that film history is not a habit of accepting prior judgments by eminent authors; films, even obscure ones, must be re-analyzed by seeing them anew. How many films which escaped notice at first viewing might now appear consequential! A primary object of arranging a collection of old films should be the unearthing of new gems of the past.

The Museum received two of Georges Franju's indictments, *Sang des Bêtes* and *Hôtel des Invalides*, but neither was booked — which grates a little. I fear the reason is that they are considered too indigestible for the tender palates of the gay Saturday afternoon pleasure-seekers. The courage manifested in presenting *Un Chien Andalou* — razor-slash and all — was not duplicated in the case of Franju's films. Now hear this: if any film is not allowed to be shown because it disturbs too much, then there is something dreadfully wrong with the basic revival policy. (I am unpleasantly reminded that the excuse advanced for not programming Visconti's *La Terra Trema* during the Italian series was ". . . too radical for public showing"! ) To mince away from an artistic work because it confronts us with a challenge to our moral, social, or political beliefs is timidity. It may well be that Franju's films are upsetting — far more upsetting is the fact that they were not screened.

A fraction of the many French films not shown during the cycle were screened in the Museum's private projection room for members of the special Saturday morning group. Some of these rejects made an excellent impression on me; indeed, two of them are two of the best in my book — and I don't mean merely the best of this series, either! The two are: *Le Brasier Ardent*, a 1923 production by the Russian emigré Ivan Mosjoukine, who, besides directing, also plays a leading role. The genuinely weird sets of several of the sequences, the Pirandello-like plot with daring changes of mood, and the mobility of silent technique at its most vivid are utilized in kinetic pitch. *Lueur* (1954) is a four-reeler directed by Dr. Pierre Thevenard. On the surface, it is a story of a convict attempting a lone escape from a remote prison through long corridors and many doors over an ultimate wall . . . but soon the viewer becomes conscious that the prisoner is shut in by more than bars and brick: the clammy space, the halls leading only to other halls, the horror of being suddenly trapped —

all spring from a deeper plane — a mental state, a trauma. This film, then, is on two levels, and we are transported from outer to inner by the brilliance of Dr. Thevenard's manipulation of the medium, including some of the most realistic treatments of memory flashback since Werner Hochbaum's *The Eternal Mask* (1937).

Six early comedies shown at these private sessions pleased me: *Max Takes Quinine* and *Max the Illusionist* with Linder; *The Mender of Brains*, directed by Cohl; *Rigadin Swallows his Ocarina*, directed by Monca; *Calino Fights a Duel*, directed by Jean Durand; and *The Magnetized Man*, directed by Romeo Bosetti. These primitive laugh-getters, antecedents to the Sennetts, are delightful. Advanced for their period — 1907-1912 I believe covers the six under discussion — they shed valuable light on that early comic tradition of trick effects and the chase, which so entranced René Clair. *La Jeunesse de Rocambole* (1913), directed by Denola, belongs to the mystery-detective serial domination immensely popular at the time; this one was especially interesting for it hinted at social awareness with scenes of the crook-protagonist's unhappy, poverty-glutted youth. *En Rade* (1926) and *La Petite Lillie* (1927-8) were both directed by Cavalcanti, with Catherine Hessling featured. Two layers of low-life are treated: in the former, soberly and tragically; in the latter, to the tune of a raucous song, bitterly blithe. *Autour de L'Argent*, directed by Jean Dréville, was made on the set of L'Herbier's *L'Argent* and masterfully duplicated the spectacular tracking shots and air of feverish excitement that personified this late silent. A short documentary, it approximates the spirit of the parent-work besides depicting the studio surroundings and the men who molded *L'Argent*, L'Herbier included. *Mor'Vran*, the 1931 seascape by Epstein, was projected minus one of its three reels, but here, repeated, is the director's preoccupation with the essences of wave, sky and shore — a preoccupation which probably reached its zenith in the great *Le Tempestaire* of 1947. *Roman d'un Tricheur* is a wry 1936 Guity: Sacha is center-stage through most of this drôle fable in which a witty commentary embellishes the continuity. *Les Petits Metiers de Paris* (1932), directed by Pierre Chenal, takes a sardonic glimpse at some of the more eccentric street-vendors of Paris. A quixotic little off-beat item, it provides quizzical insights into corners overlooked by Baedeker. *La Petite Lise* is an early talkie by Jean Grémillon and one in which sound functions imaginatively. The masochistic boredom of island convicts and the jazz cadences of nightclub revelry supply the subject matter for two tremendous sequences. *L'Etoile de Mer* (1928), directed by Man Ray and based on the poem by Robert Desnos, was shown by the Museum some years ago. On reviewing it again, I was, as before, moved by it: the shrouded shots of pain and regret, the flowing mist . . . It is a cine-poem, complete in its meaning, but not literally so: you don't understand it the way a thousand other films are understood — films neatly plotted, thickly worded, and magnified by the wide screen.

It is necessary that I close on a dismal note. Much have I heard of M. Henri Langlois' devotion to silent films and his resourcefulness in collecting them. This is fine, and he has my respect. But I am appalled that the bulk of the silent films he sent over here are without their titles. They seem to have been arbitrarily extracted from the prints! It is a fact that most American film students, in examining silent pictures, place great value on the titles as an index to the time of production and as a criterion of the changing styles of the works themselves: titles have both an historical and artistic importance. I have been told that M. Langlois dislikes titles and believes that silent films are improved by their deletion. The head of the Cinémathèque is entitled to his quirks, but quirk is surely too mild a word for this singular and dangerous attitude. It is to be hoped that the film students of France seriously challenge M. Langlois on his stand. I pray they force him to re-insert the titles.

RICHARD KRAFT

## THE FILM SOCIETY SCENE

Edited by Robert Hughes and Gideon Bachmann

In the November issue, Elodie Osborn mentioned her society's work in presenting film programs for the children of her community. This month, Peretz Johannes, head of the film program at the Museum of the City of New York, discusses films for children in a broader context.

### FILMS FOR CHILDREN

If ever there is going to be an intelligent film audience, it will not be created by the adult film society, the college course in film appreciation, the cultivated film magazine, or by periodic or regular museum screenings. It is going to be done by exposing the young to the very best in the art of cinema — not once in a while or casually, but regularly and in a formal, organized way: even, if necessary, by compulsory methods, just as children are taught literature, painting, music, and dance. Few adults, if nurtured only on comic books, "True Story" magazines, and dime detectives, will ever find Shakespeare. Similarly, few adults find their way to a full understanding and appreciation of the form and possibilities of film after having spent a lifetime with only the contemporary commercial cinema.

From time to time, public-spirited individuals rise up in protest against what their children are exposed to in the local movie houses; and a "better film" movement gets under way, or a censorship committee is formed, or the motion picture industry itself sets up a "self-regulating" committee to clean up the films children see. The work of these groups, though limited, cannot be completely disparaged or disapproved. It has kept children from seeing some of the more sadistic of the commercial films. And if the films which the censors have approved show distorted views of life, if the values are peculiarly inhuman and often amoral, the blame cannot be put wholly on the censors. What has Hollywood given them to work with?

These people are not producing films; they are merely screening out the worst — knowing that children are going to go to the movies, approved or not. The least that can be done is to sift out the most disturbing films, and this they usually do.

But, by and large, the entire approach has been negative and has arisen out of fear. The purpose has been to keep the child from seeing deleterious films, rather than to show him the beauty inhering in this vastly complicated medium. Just like the comic book, the film never enters the school except during lunch or recreation hours. And the child is permitted to have it then only so he will keep quiet or out of the way.

Of course there is hardly a school in the land today which does not have at least one 16 mm. projector; and there is hardly a school which does not have its "A-V" man and its own budget for film purchase or rental. Film is used extensively as a "teaching tool" and some schools have gone so far as to make their own films. But these uses of film fall into the category of conventional didactics. They do not really demonstrate an interest in film. What is being done is simply a substitution of films for textbooks on every subject under the sun — except the film itself. The films are not being used for the teaching of film appreciation; quite the contrary.

The situation is different in other countries, although to overestimate the amount and quality of activity abroad would be erroneous. There is of course the well-known Children's Film Foundation in England, set up in 1951 in cooperation with the British film industry. Of the nineteen films it has produced (to my knowledge), five have dealt with robberies,

five with spy rings, one with a smuggling gang, and only eight, mostly the more recent ones, have dealt with stories of "achievement." Of greater interest in many ways than the CFF is the more recently organized Society of Film Teachers, also an English group, which has as its purpose the promotion of the teaching of *film as an art form* in the school system. In a membership brochure, the society asks:

"Why are so many films so bad? It is because millions of film-goers pay to see them. Film is an industry as well as an art, and some of the businessmen who control it are content to turn out rubbish as long as the public pays to see it. Not until the public decides that it will pay only to see good films will there be any improvement in their general quality. This cannot happen until there is an improvement in the taste of film-goers — an improvement which can be brought about in school. Only when teachers understand this duty will children be protected against the morally and *aesthetically* (my emphasis) harmful influence of the bad films; only then will they enjoy to the full those valuable experiences which come from seeing good film; only then will the film have a chance to become an art both great and popular, as the Elizabethan drama was."

Membership is open to Americans at only seventy-five cents a year, and the Society's journal, sent to all members, gives information of kindred film activities throughout the world.

In India there is the Children's Film Society (organized in 1955), which aims "to create and develop amongst the children and adolescents an appreciation of films."

The Dansk Skolscene (Danish School Theater), in which all Danish teachers' organizations are represented and which has been producing theater performances for school children since 1921, extended its activity in 1937 to include film shows. Under its auspices a conference of 100 participants met in 1955 to discuss the problems of teaching film appreciation in the school. The Government Film Library, in conjunction with the teachers' organizations and Dansk Skolscene, has worked out practical methods for incorporating courses of this nature in the school curriculum. Already six teachers in Copenhagen and two outside the city have started teaching film appreciation on various age levels.

And so on around the world: France, Poland, Sweden, the USSR, Belgium.

In this country, too, things are beginning to stir. More and more museums and libraries are showing and buying films specifically for children. A meeting jointly sponsored by the New York City Board of Education, the Metropolitan Audio-Visual Association, and the Museum of the City of New York, will be held at the Museum on December 3 to discuss the topic "Children as Film-makers." This meeting will try to show teachers and curriculum coordinators the value of teaching film appreciation in the schools. Shirley Clarke, a well-known experimental film-maker, is now teaching a pilot course to fifth-grade boys at St. David's School in New York City, and it is hoped that in the spring teachers will be permitted to observe her methods. But more important than all of these developments are the plans now being worked out by Amos Vogel of Cinema 16 to present a series of films for youngsters early in the coming year; and also the plans for the formation of the "American Center for Children's Films," an independent organization which will encourage the production, importation, and use of films for children, as well as the teaching of film appreciation to children of school age.

Elodie Osborn in her article last month told briefly what her society has done with children's film showings. She is indeed a pioneer. More film societies must follow her example. The film societies are the core of any intelligent film activity in this country. The film society members are the only people who have the knowledge and integrity to provide the nucleus of any further developments along this line. Films are available. Financially, there is no risk involved. The seed is there; it should be planted.

PERETZ JOHNNES

#### AFFS REGIONAL PREVIEW'S

The first Western Regional Preview Weekend takes place Thanksgiving weekend, November 29-December 1, in the screening room of Audio Film Center, San Francisco. As at other AFFS preview sessions, a great number of newly released and unjustly neglected films will be shown. Christopher Bishop — who is responsible for this preview along with AFFS western vice-president Varda Pelter — reports that one of the features of the weekend will be a discussion of film society goals. If demand warrants it, there will be a second preview of other new films in San Francisco this spring.

The third Midwest Preview will be held December 27-29 at the University of Chicago. Further details are available from the headquarters of the American Federation of Film Societies, 1209 West Jarvis, Chicago 26.

#### CONVERSATION OF THE "EASTERN"

On October 19, AFFS and the Museum of the City of New York co-sponsored a symposium on the "Eastern," the new American realism in films (as seen in New York location features from *The Quiet One* through *Twelve Angry Men* and *On the Bowery*). Director Sidney Lumet, director-editor Sidney Meyers, editor Carl Lerner, critic Hollis Alpert, producer Himan Brown, studio owner Martin Poll, and banker Herbert Golden participated in a discussion led by Gideon Bachmann. This was the first of a series of programs on film and film-makers today which AFFS has planned; future programs will be announced in this space next month.

#### NEW RELEASES

AFFS, with the help of Robert Pike of the Creative Film Society, Los Angeles, has arranged with Films Inc. to make available for the first time on 16 mm. Gjon Mili's experimental jazz short *Jammin' the Blues*.

NEXT MONTH: Jack C. Ellis — a member of the Northwestern University faculty and editor of the AFFS Newsletter — on the relation of the film teacher to the film society.

## BOOKS

MARILYN MONROE by Tommaso Giglio; FEDERICO FELLINI by Renzo Renzi; HUMPHREY BOGART by Tom Granich. Parma: Ugo Guanda, 1957. Italian texts.

After an interruption, publisher Guanda is renewing his effort to provide the Italian public with small, compact volumes dedicated to the discussion and evaluation of the movies in their artistic, economic, social, and moral contexts. Thus, these studies of the Marilyn Monroe myth, the importance of Fellini (clearly the most discussed Italian director today), and the unforgettable personality of Humphrey Bogart represent the latest contributions to this series by some of Italy's leading film critics and scholars. Scheduled additions to the series include books on the works of Wilder, Visconti, Pudovkin, Eisenstein, Clair, and Olivier—another enterprise of substantial importance for the future of the cinematic art. — G. N. F.

HISTORIA DO CINEMA, Volume I, by Fernando Duarte. 128 pp. Rio Maior, 1957. Portuguese text.

Duarte, a young Portuguese intellectual sincerely concerned with motion pictures, is the founder of the Cineclub of Rio Maior and the author of four books on the movies. His latest effort, a "History of the Cinema" in two volumes, constitutes an attempt to publicize the cause of good films in Portugal. This endeavor deserves praise and encouragement, if only out of consideration of the fact that Portugal stands today as a nation whose cinematic culture is limited to the work of a handful of pioneers. We wish—with the same sincerity marking Duarte's writings—that Portugal will one day join the ranks of the many countries essaying genuinely creative and original contributions to the art of the film. — G. N. F.

FILM AS ART by Rudolf Arnheim. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1957. 230 pp. Price: \$1.50.

Rudolf Arnheim's essays on films, written in the Thirties, have been compiled here with a brief explanatory note by the author. By his own admission, Arnheim has forsaken the cinema for the past two decades and has been content to estab-

lish standards rather than interpose judgments. Arnheim's stand is unfortunate since his "Film," published in 1933, is still the most important work ever written on the aesthetics of cinematic perception. The four selections from "Film" reprinted in this volume stand up better than his subsequent writings, which sound like nostalgic restatements of an enthusiasm for motion pictures dating back to the early effects of Chaplin, Von Sternberg, Pudovkin, and minor Ufa directors.

Although Arnheim sought to solve the problems of the talking film in his essay entitled "A New Laocoon" (1938), he concludes with the comforting notion that "hybrid forms are quite unstable. They tend to change from their own unreality into purer forms, even though this may mean a return to the past." For better or for worse, the film has gone its own way undeterred by Arnheim's strictures on form. Nevertheless, no critic has ever quite understood the artistic process of filmmaking from the first step of camera placement with the clarity and precision of Arnheim. His insights into cinematography and related perceptual processes are alone worth the price of this book. PETER WALSH

FILM FORM; THE FILM SENSE (Essays in Film Theory) by Sergei Eisenstein. Edited and translated by Jay Leyda. Two volumes in one. 561 pp. Ill. New York: Meridian Books, 1957.

The greatest and most illuminating writing on the cinema, which originally appeared here in 1947 ("The Film Sense") and 1949 ("Film Form"), is now available in one handy, handsome paper-bound volume with all the illustrations which formed so integral a part of the original editions. This is the cinema's Talmud, its Mosaic laws, basic and immutable, foretelling the yet unrealized splendors inherent in what the author called "this wonderfully beautiful and infinitely absorbing medium." That Eisenstein was himself not vouchsafed the chance to realize some of his most transcendent dreams for this art is the single wistful sadness assailing the avid reader as an unrelenting overtone to this mercurial work so imbued with love and passion for the medium.

But its value as a positive statement is real, vital, and applicable to the film poets of tomorrow. The roads to Parnassus are many, as the film poets of the past have shown us, but no one can fail to be inspired by the visions in these pages to add luster to the cinema muse. Written with a prodigality of scholarship, this work itself provides the theoretical solution to the problem that its author poses, i.e., that of "synthesizing the arts, organically fusing them in the film medium (which) awaits resolution."

We must all be indebted to Jay Leyda for making it possible for us to have this enthralling, jubilant book to give us some hope in a world glutted with so much catchpenny junk currently on its movie screens.

— H. G. W.

EROTIK FOR MILLIONER (Kaerlighed i Filmen) by Ove Brusendorff and Poul Henningsen. 146 pp. Ill. Copenhagen: Thaning & Appels Forlag, 1957.

And still they come, books dealing with the erotic aspect of the films. After Ado Kyrou's and Lo Duca's "Amour-érotisme et cinéma" and "L'érotisme au cinéma" from France, comes this one from Denmark by the authors of the astonishing two-volume "Kaerlighedens Billedbog," which performed a similar (but far more exhaustive) service for eroticism in art from the ancient Greeks to the present day. (They have done similar erotic anthologies of literature, one "from the Marquis de Sade to Henry Miller" and another "from Aristophanes to Maupassant.")

There are sections on America's special contribution to sex in the movies, censorship, pornography, etc. \* A smiling Marilyn Monroe, *en déshabillé* in black lace, decorates the

\* A Danish colleague assures me the text is perceptive and not in the least facetious. The still captions are frequently real eyebrow raisers in their revelations.

cover. \*\* The illustrations for the most part supplement the collection Lo Duca presented in his book and, though many are familiar, some are quite surprising indeed. A few are inexplicably included and there is some overlapping with Lo Duca's book. On the whole it is an amusing book and certainly deserves a place right next to Lo Duca, Kyrrou, et al. As one indication of the absorbing nature of this work, this reviewer "read" the last fifty pages of the book before realizing there was no text save the captions to the stills.

The book is dedicated, in a graceful poem, to Miss Monroe, *bien entendu*.

— H. G. W.

\*\* An almost exact duplicate of the Monroe still on Lo Duca's cover.

#### ALSO RECEIVED:

FICHE FILMOGRAPHIQUE. I. D. H. E. C., 92 Champs-Elysées, Paris 8. Analyses of films. No. 128: *La rue vers l'or* (*The Gold Rush*), Charles Chaplin; No. 129: *Me femme est un sorcière* (*I Married a Witch*), René Clair.

CINEMA NUOVO. Via Fatebenefratelli 15, Milano. No. 111 - No. 115: "La concezione del tempo in Proust e nel cinema," Guido Aristarco; "Il culto del passato," Ulrich Gregor on East German production; "False interpretazioni del realismo," Cecilia Mangini; "Come divenni regista," Sergei M. Eisenstein; Hans Richter writes about his meeting with S. M. Eisenstein; an exhaustive coverage of the 1957 Venice Film Festival.

TEATR I FILM. Ujazdowskie 45, Warsaw. A bi-weekly magazine giving good coverage of Polish theater and film productions.

SIGHT AND SOUND, Autumn 1957. British Film Institute, 164 Shaftesbury Ave., London, W.C.2. "Looking For Documentary," by David Robinson; "An Interview with Chaplin," Margaret Hinxman; "Aspects of the Pre-war Japanese Cinema," J. L. Anderson.

BIANCO E NERO, September 1957. Via Cola di Rienzo 243, Rome. An issue devoted to the work of Michelangelo Antonioni.

CAHIERS DU CINEMA, No. 75, 1957, 146 Champs-Elysées, Paris 8. An interview with Robert Bresson; Jean Cocteau's dialogue on *Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne*; Jean Solmué writes on Robert Bresson's characters.

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